PCW TODAY

Britain's best-selling classic computer magazine

Issue 10 Aug-Oct 98

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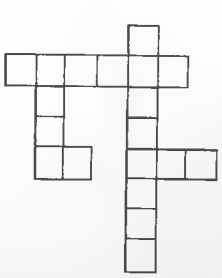

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The British Amstrad PCW Club
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This Issue...

HI THERE! Welcome to another bumper edition of *Today* - once again it's our biggest (and hopefully best) ever.

It's summer time again, so I hope you've all unpacked those raincoats and woolly jumpers. Ah, the joys of the British weather!

Mind you, if you're reading this on an exotic and sunny beach in some far-flung corner of the world - the weather's absolutely gorgeous here - you'll be gutted you missed it!... Before I wander too far down that tangent, let's get back to the real world and the wonders of the PCW.

Will your trusty Amstrad withstand the traumas of the millennium bug? Turn to page 18 to find out. And who's won this year's Joyce Awards, you'll find the answer on page 21.

Big news this summer is the announcement that John Elliott has been working on a new version of CP/M for the PcW 16. Find out all the latest in our news section.

I hope you like the mag and have a fantastic summer

Adrian Braddy,
Editor.

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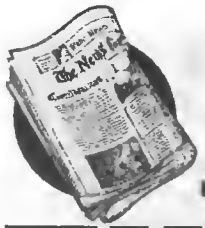
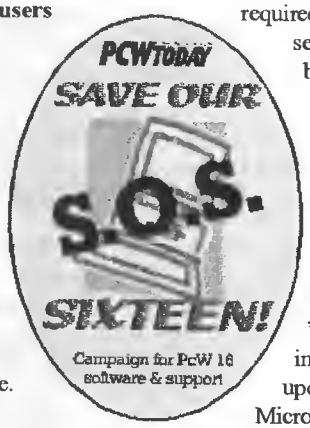


news update...

Elliott develops CP/M for the '16

LIKE a knight in shining armour, chivalrous John Elliott has charged to the rescue of PcW 16 users everywhere.



PCW Today has seen a pre-release version of CP/M 2 for the '16 that John has been secretly writing. The new software will bring the latest Amstrad into line with its predecessors and should mean that compatible software will become available in future.

When the full version of the new CP//M operating system is launched later this year it promises to dramatically revive the fortunes of the flagging '16. It should also finally convince users of the classic PCWs that the '16 is a true PCW.

Previously, the biggest problem for programmers was the complexity of the Rosanne operating system. Writing software for it was a slow process and required expensive add-ons. Now seasoned CP/M programmers will be able to turn their talents to the PcW 16 quite easily.

At present the implementation is based on CP/M 2 and the 'classic' PCWs run on CP/M 3. This means that not all current CP/M software will work with the '16 version. John Elliott plans to include CP/M 3 features in later updates but graphical packages like MicroDesign will sadly never work. On the up-side, BASIC will work, even if it is a little shaky at the moment.

Although it's only at the Alpha testing stage and there are still plenty of known bugs, we can already see what CP/M 16 is going to be like. There are two system discs - one is the '16 loader whilst the other is the CP/M start of day disc. It is possible to return to the Rosanne screen from CP/M - you simply type DESK. In all likelihood, the finished product will be public domain, which means it will be distributed to users free of charge.

John has a long wish-list for further updates of CP/M for the '16 and jusdging by previous form, he is likely to make many more improvements before the full version is made available.

The Save Our Sixteen Campaign, launched in May by *PCW Today* is proving very successful. As well as the new version of CP/M, there are several other programmers now working on software. Richard Hill of 98 Software is working on his own version of CP/M and aims to develop Basic 98 for the '16 too. Rob Buckley is still working on '16 software, despite losing all previous work when his PC hard drive crashed.

If you requested an SOS Support Pack and you haven't got it yet, you should soon.

MicroDesign 2 relaunched

A BEST-SELLING desktop publisher has been re-launched by SD MicroSystems.

Creative Technology have given them permission to sell MicroDesign 2 as a budget alternative to its illustrious successor - MD3. The package has been priced at just £29.95 - that's £20 less that MD3.

Steve Denson of SD Micro said: "The advantage of MicroDesign 2 is that you don't need to expand your PCW to use it. Without spending an excessive amount, you get a great budget DTP that will work brilliantly with 256k and the PCW's own dot matrix printer."

The package was critically acclaimed when it first appeared but was phased out with the introduction of MicroDesign3. Now SD MicroSystems hope that they can attract interest from new users who cannot afford the more expensive later version and do not need its more advanced features.

SD MicroSystem's new summer range also includes a bundle of games and a bumper pack of 500 graphics for MicroDesign and LocoScript 4.

Exclusive!

Why LocoScript turned down PcW 16 word processor deal

LOCOSCRIPT Software have sensationally revealed that they WOULD have converted LocoScript for the PcW 16.

They only spurned the chance after Amstrad asked them to do the job in an impossible THREE MONTHS.

And the PCW giants feel that the PcW 16 would have been a storming success if it had come with a pre-loaded version of LocoScript.

Managing Director of the LocoScript empire, Howard Fisher, said: "When we were called to a meeting to discuss the new machine some years ago, one of the paramount requirements was to get it to market within an incredibly short time-scale - three months for the software if my memory is correct.

"That - together with the requirement that the screen was to display a true WYSIWYG view of the document - was why we suggested Amstrad went to Creative Technolgy, who had most of the components ready for a quick and dirty conversion.

"Given that the PcW 16 then didn't appear for over two years, with hindsight maybe we should have stretched the truth about what we could have done."

He added: "I hope that if we had been involved, existing LocoScript users wouldn't be so disappointed on moving up to the new machine."

Mr Fisher is not impressed with the PcW 16 as it stands. He said: "It is a shame that the PcW 16 is such a poor successor for existing PCW owners. It's great as a machine that provides a very basic word processor, provided you don't want to do much more than typing. But if you're used to the considerable power lying behind LocoScript, the PcW 16's word processing will prove a considerable disappointment.

"Maybe that would have been different if we had worked on its software."

Amstrad's Cliff Lawson denied that they asked LocoScript to write a word processor in three months. He said: "I think the time-scale we originally suggested to LocoScript was nine months and they - quite rightly as it turned out - said that they couldn't make a WYSIWYG word processor in that time."

"They then suggested Creative, rather over-optimistically suggesting that because they had all the experience of MicroDesign, they could achieve the time-scale.

"As it happened, it took a wee bit more than nine months to finish the PcW '16. I think it kicked off around September 1994, with a planned finish for the following Summer. In actual fact it took another year on top and it didn't finally ship until November 1996.

"The original nine months turned into more like 25 months!! But this is because none of us realised just how complicated a YSIWYG word processor is to write.

"Even in the Windows world there aren't actually that many people who have ever written a WYSIWYG editor In programming terms, writing one completely from scratch in Z80 assembler is a MASSIVE task. We know now!

Protext chief apologises for fall in customer service standards

DUE to personal problems, Brian Watson of Protext Software has had to withdraw the long-standing offer to write a specific printer driver at no additional cost for each purchaser of the PCW version of Protext.

Brian feels that this move should not effect too many users: "In fact, the program disc already includes over thirty pre-written drivers and, using the manual's full and clear installation and set-up instructions, one of them can easily be modified by the user to work with any printer described as being 'Epson-compatible'.

"I am very sorry that the recent change at home (and the new business outside computing which I have been running since January) has resulted in *the*, and specifically *my*, service being less than I would like recently. I have been on the receiving end of companies' poor service myself from time to time and it gives me no pleasure at all to be in this position.

"It is not a matter of money, it is simply a matter of lack of available time when there is a home and family to look after full time in what is left of the day when work is over.

"Supporting long-discontinued computers, such as the original PCWs/ PcWs, has always been a labour of love for me, rather than a commercially sensible occupation but I still feel that if a job is worth doing for other reasons - and it is - it should be done well, if at all possible. Most companies nowadays charge for their additional services, including the supply of add-ons and on-line user support, either by a direct charge or by the use of premium phone lines, but that has never been our policy, nor will it be.

"I hope that once things have been fully resolved at home, I might be able to step up the level of user support again.

"There is no question of us stopping supplying Protext, and user-support in other ways goes on unabated. It is just the offer to custom-write a specific printer driver which is being withdrawn until further notice.

"In the mean time, I apologise to anyone who finds themselves affected."

PCW Club Scene

Amstrad Computer Club Incorporated
Open to all Amstrad users in South Australia. Weekly meetings are held on Tuesdays at 2/24 Torreno Street, Mitcham, between 6.30pm and 9pm. Contact David Simpson, DAS@picknow.com.au

Berkshire PCW Users Group
This lively group is run by Ed Harris, who also edits the regular newsletter - PCW Link. The group welcome postal members. If you'd like more information, contact Ed at 121 Bullbroook Drive, Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 2QR. Tel: 0585 220204.

Birmingham and West Midlands PCW Club
To find out more about this midlands based club, get in touch with John Bell on: 0121 4343078

Brisbane PCW User Group
Mike Mackenzie runs this Australian club. To contact him from outside the country, telephone 617 32775701. Mike is also now the LocoScript Software representative down under.

British Amstrad PCW Club
The Spring edition of The Disc Drive is, as ever, well produced and full of interesting information. New editor, Mike Elliston has used LocoScript 4 to produce the mag for the first time - the result is very impressive. Contact David Lalieu, 10 Sheridan Avenue, Thundersley, Essex SS7 1RD for more details.

Capital Computer Club
Could this be the home of the world's most Southerly PCWs? The group cover PCWs along with other formats. For further information, write to: 13 Eagle Street, Karori, Wellington 6005, New Zealand.

Cornwall PCW Club
The July/August newsletter is once again musing about the future of the club. This issue will be discussed at the meeting on November 14. Meetings before then include September 12, when members will learn how to construct a CD list and on October 10, when constructing calendars is on the agenda. For more details, contact chairman. John Walker on 01752 706266.

Costa del Sol PCW Users Club
No longer affiliated to the U3A, the group has 15 active members. Full membership costs P3,000 per year. The newsletter - The Front Page is published monthly and it is hoped to set up a library of public domain software too. Meetings are fortnightly on Mondays from 11am at the Manilla Bar, Paseo Maritimo, Los Boliches. Contact Ken Tether on 95 293 2096 for more details.

Crawley PCW Club
The latest edition of the newsletter has mysteriously shrunk to A5 size - unintentional apparently! On September 3, the club's AGM takes place and Chairman John Fisher stands down. Then on October 1, the subject will be the PCW and the Internet. Postal members are welcome. Contact John Fisher on: 01732 863062.

Devon PCW Club
Contact: Chairman, Peter Godderidge on 01626 330373, Treasurer, Christine Stone on 01392 252646, or Newsletter Editor, Andy Young on 01395 577972.

Hastings & Eastbourne PCW Club
This group has one of the best monthly newsletters around. The next meeting will be on September 21 and it's an open night. Then on October 19, there's a double-whammy with a demonstration of the PcW 16 accounts package and a guide to logos in MicroDesign 3. Contact: George Magee on: 01323 833969.

Heads of the Valleys Group
This Welsh group still continues to operate and the few remaining members still meet occasionally. Contact: Anthony Hill on 01222 618012.

Hereford Computer Club
It costs £15 to join up and that includes subscription to the club magazine - Keyboard. Meetings are held from 7pm on the first Wednesday of each month at The Cellar, 41 Widemarsh Street, Hereford.

Javea Computer Club
Regular meetings are held at Pedro's Restaurant, Javea in Alicante. PCW users are welcome. Contact Tom Hughes on: 96 5583508.

Joyce Computer Club
The PCWs are known as Joyces in Holland and this group proves that they are just as popular as in Britain. Contact: Frank Van Empel, Leksmondhof 8, NL-1108 EM Amsterdam.

Kentish PCW Club
Meetings are held on the first Wednesday of every month at the Chapel Hall in Bush Road, Cuxton. Postal members are welcome. For further details on this Kent-based club, contact: Leslie Merchant, 14 Mill Road, Northfleet, Gravesend. Tel: 01474 335882.

Leeds Amstrad PCW Club
The group holds monthly 'hands-on' meetings with demonstrations of PCW hardware and software. For more information on the club, contact Paul Newmark, 18 Claythorpe Road, Leeds LS16 5HW. Tel: 0113 2755576.

MicroDesign International User Group
Membership to this large club costs £8 and includes subscription to the excellent magazine - The Design Tree which comes out twice a year and covers all PCW matters, not just desktop publishing. Members also have free access to more than 6000 public domain discs. Many of them are fonts and graphics for MicroDesign. Contact: Doug Cox, 132 Adelaide Grove, East Cowes, Isle of Wight PO32 6DF. 01983 296366.

Morley Amstrad PCWers
This club meets in Morely Public Library at 7.30pm on the second Tuesday of every month. Membership costs just £10. The group has a library of PCW software. Contact: Frank King on 01924 430319.

Perthshire PCW Club
For more information on this Scottish PCW group, contact David Paterson, 26 Moulin Crescent, Perth PH1 2EA. Tel: 01738 621346.

RADSTOCK.pcw
This relatively new arrival on the PCW club scene meets on the second Friday of each month at the Radstock Methodist Church from 7.30pm. For more information, contact Adrian Hooper, 40 Kilmersdon Road, Haydon, Radstock, Avon BA3 3QN. Tel: 01761 436276.

SCOTWEST.pcw
David Williams edits the club magazine - CHR$(7) and according to the June newsletter, the computer industry is responsible for altering our climate!? The next meeting is on August 8, after the club's summer break. The newsletter also contains a review of club magazines and a useful small-ads section called Track. Contact: David Williams, 32/34 Carfin Street, New Stevenson, Motherwell ML1 4JL. Tel: 01698 732403.

SIG - Amstrad PCW
Ed Harris is the British contact for the UK base of this Mensa group (See Berkshire Group). There's also a branch in the States and they produce a regular newsletter.

Somerset PCW Club
The group are bothered by falling membership, so have decided to allow PC users into the group. They produce a quarterly newsletter. For details, contact: Elsa Turner on 01935 823618.

South Essex PCW Club
Now renamed The British Amstrad PCW Club because of a more national approach. Contact: David Lalieu, 10 Sheridan Avenue, Thundersley, Essex SS7 1RD. Tel: 01702 551618.

Teesside PCW Users Group
The North East's only PCW club holds monthly meetings on a Monday at Acklam Library in Middlesbrough. This may have to change as the council have now decided to charge. During improvements to the library, members have been seen to move across to The Coronation pub! There is now no joining fee and the annual membership charge has been waived. Members simply pay £1 per meeting. For further details, contact Gladys Baker, 8 Knayton Grove, Stockton on Tees TS19 7RW. Tel: 01642 580018.

Thornton PCW Club
Meetings are held on every second Tuesday at the Cleveleys Community Centre, Blackpool. New members are very welcome to the group, formerly known as the Wyred Computer Club. For more information, contact Steve at 5 Carlisle Grove, Thornton Cleveleys, Lancashire FY5 4BY.

Widmore PCW Club
The AGM takes place on September 23. Dorothy Featherstone reports that the workshop has been a great success this year and apparently some exciting work has been produced with LocoScript 4. Members meet on the third Wednesday of the month at Bromley Adult Education College. We hope to have some pictures from a meeting of the Bromley club in the next issue. For more details, contact Dorothy Featherstone on 01689 858105.

8 Bit Magazine
The great 8-Bit is soon to become "late". Issue 19 is the penultimate volume and it is a two-in-one job, packed with features including four pages of '16 gossip. There's also the great, conversational News Shorts page. With only one issue to come, it's probably not worth subscribing, but you may be able to pick-up a copy of the last edition. Contact: Brian Watson, Harrowden, 39 High Street, Sutton-in-the-Isle, Ely CB6 2RA. Tel: 01353 777006.

PCW Today is now on the Internet. Why not join the 3500 people who have already visited our site
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John Craggs

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Auto Discat

If you are hopelessly messy and you have no idea what's on any of your discs, you could well benefit from this new labelling package from SD Micro. Monica Dickerson investigates

HAVING had my PCW for nearly twelve years, it's not surprising that I have witnessed the birth (and demise) of several products aimed at the PCW market. Many of these I have tried and in grappling with their procedures I have created hundreds of files on scores of discs.

Now another new offering for the PCW market is on hand to enable me to grope my way through the store of used and forgotten files, as well as the current and active ones. Auto-Discat from SD MicroSystems is a neat and compact program offering more than its modest price of £ 12.50 implies.

Quite simply it lists all files on a disc and will produce those lists in a variety of ways - on screen, on paper, or on disc in a format which can be imported into LocoScript.

Auto-Discat runs from CP/M and comes with a well-printed Manual which gives clear instructions on how to make a copy of the program so that it will work from switch-on. One or two minor discrepancies between Manual and on-screen Menus in no way affect the easy operation of the program.

The main menu offers the chance to define one's own printer defaults, and these are then stored for all subsequent use. Next the program will read into memory the disc swapped into Drive A:, and this data can then be manipulated in various ways. Although the item is numbered <8> on the Menu, I found the "Sort" option for me the next most useful - a procedure which re-arranges (or selects) files to choice, even those files which I had "Hidden" on my LocoScript Start-of-Day discs. The chosen list can then be saved, or printed out as a list or in columns on paper, or printed on three differently-sized labels.

Changing to another Group or Drive or Disc is catered for, though probably only on LocoScript is the Group facility much utilized by operators. If LocoScript is booted up after a session of Auto-Discat, the Directory files saved under Option <5> (indicated by the .TXT extension) can be inserted into a LocoScript document and edited to choice.

This is a very handy little utility that should be part of everyone's software collection. And at such a bargain price, there are no excuses not to buy. Auto Discat provides a novel and easy way to label your discs.

After just a few minutes work, you will regain control of your disc box.

INFO

AUTO DISCAT

Price: £12.50
Company: SD MicroSystems
Contact: 07000 736427
Format: Runs from CP/M on all PCWs but not the PcW 16 as yet.
Ease of use: ●●●●●
Features: ●●●●
Value for Money: ●●●●●
Overall: ●●●●
Verdict: An excellent aid to organistation. This package is sure to get your discs in order in no time. Tremendous value for money.

Once again, SD MicroSystems have spotted a gap in the market and filled it.

Auto Discat is available from SD MicroSystems (Dept PCW), P.O. Box 99, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 1NA, Tel/Fax 07000 736427, priced £12.50.

RoutePlanner

Comsoft have just released an updated version of this major new release

WHEN we first reviewed this great package, two issues ago, our only big concern was the lack of mouse control.

Well Richard Fairhurst, the programmer, took note and rapidly brought out this new version of the software, fully compatible with Creative Technology's KeyMouse.

He also finly tuned the whole product with several other small improvements.

The best of these is a new 'locate' function that lets you instantly zoom into a named place on the map of your choice, speeding things up immensly.

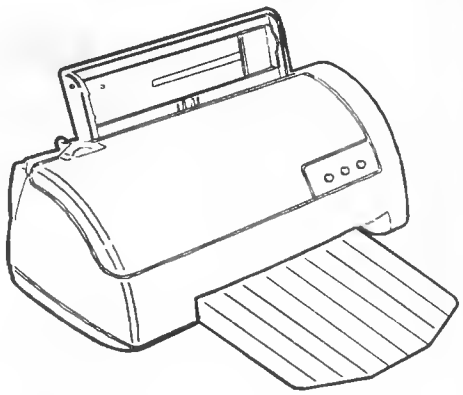
New keyboard shortcuts have been included for those people who prefer to keep away from the mouse. This is a great improvement, and means that you no longer have to drag the pointer around with the cursor keys - an irritation of earlier versions

The coastline mapping, which was previously a wekness, has been improved, and it is now more accurate. The road data has been updated to Spring 1998, to take into account the new roads springing up all the time.

Finally, RoutePlanner can now generate MicroDesign 3 compatible shots of the maps, meaning that you can now incorporate them into LocoScript 4.

Although it has merely been tweaked, the new version of RoutePlanner is better than ever before - you really should get hold of a copy if you can. Updates are available from ComSoft or LocoScript Software.

Inkjet printer package for just £135 – or less!



Unhappy about your existing print quality? Then take advantage of our special offer – LocoScript 4, Printer Support Pack and the Olivetti JP170 monochrome inkjet printer. We'll throw in LocoSpell free of charge too.

This complete package costs just £135 including VAT and delivery. We also provide a cable to plug the printer into the PCW9512 or PcW10's external printer socket, but if you have a PCW8256/8512 or PcW9256 you may also need the Power Pack at an extra £50 (saving £9.95 on our standard price). And as we supply a Start-of-day disc ready set-up for the printer, it's easy to get going straight away.

or print in colour for just £195

If you want to print in colour, take advantage of the new low price of the Epson Stylus Color 400. Our complete Stylus Color 400 package costs just £195 – that's £30 less than our previous price. The package include the Stylus Color 400 printer, the cable, LocoScript 4, LocoSpell and the Printer Support Pack (but you will need the Power Pack if you have a PCW8256/8512 or PcW9256). And just like the Olivetti package, the Start-of-day disc we supply lets you get going straight away. *Note that the Stylus Color 400 cannot be used with CP/M programs.*

Great new printing facilities

LocoScript 4 and these printer packages give you great new printing features. You'll be able to include pictures in your documents, print newspaper style columns and print with a range of typefaces at different sizes – and print in colour with the Stylus Color 400 package. The printers include a cut sheet feeder, so you can load a sheaf of paper into the printer and simply leave it printing.

As these printers are inkjet printers you'll find them much quieter than the Amstrad's printer. Use the Olivetti's built-in fonts and you'll find printing is faster too.

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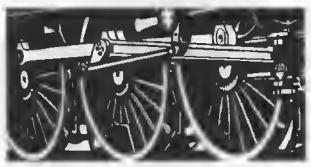
If you currently have LocoScript 3 or LocoScript 4, it gets even better. Return your LocoScript 3 Master Disc with your order and we'll reduce the price by £10 to £125 for the Olivetti or £185 for the Stylus. Return your LocoScript 4 Master Disc and the complete Olivetti package will cost an incredible £99 or the Stylus package £159!



LOCOSCRIPT SOFTWARE
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Note: The JP170 is colour upgradeable, but this option is not supported by LocoScript 4. The Power Pack normally costs £59.95 unless purchased together with a printer package.

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- ☐ I have LocoScript 3 £125
- ☐ I have LocoScript 4 £99

☐ **Stylus Color 400**
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- ☐ I have LocoScript 3 £185
- ☐ I have LocoScript 4 £159

☐ **Locomotive Power Pack** £50
(bought with a printer package)

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Postcode:

Phone No:

Delivery details if different from above

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☐ Access/Mastercard/Visa/Switch:

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I confirm that I am the cardholder and that the card is registered to the above delivery address

Signature

Model of PCW (Please circle)
8256 8512 9512 9512+ 9256 10

PCW Disc drive (Please circle) 3" 3½"

the programmer's view

Seasoned PCW programmer - Richard Fairhurst - reveals why he believes the PcW 16 hasn't taken off

AT the launch of PCW Today's "Save Our Sixteen" campaign, the editor said: "Programmers seem to have given up on the '16 before they even got started." That's true enough and for one good reason - Amstrad haven't given us the tools for the job!

It's a simple problem - if you want to program a PcW 16 - you need a PC. Amstrad's development system will run on nothing else. As well as a couple of PCWs, I've got two Apple Macs and two Amstrad CPCs. All of them are capable of assembling Z80 code - indeed, RoutePlanner PCW was written on a CPC. But because the PcW 16's developers (Amstrad and Creative Technology) have tied the essential programming resources so tightly to their own PsyQ system, none of these are of any use for writing '16 software.

Ludicrously, there isn't even an assembler to run on the PcW 16 itself. All Amstrad or Creative Technology had to do was fling, say - £ 50 in the direction of Brian Watson and Peter Campbell, holders of the copyright to Maxam, and invest just one week of work in giving it a basic text-only shell to run on the PcW 16. This would ensure new software development, allowing Dixons display models to show something other than the screen saver or - more commonly - "Fatal System Failure please insert rescue disc." Hence more sales. Needless to say, it didn't happen.

Cliff Lawson, Amstrad hardware man and all-round good egg, attributes the lack of PcW 16 software to the comparatively small user base - which makes it an unrealistic proposition for big developers who can get far better returns from the PC.

Don't blame existing PCW owners or programmers for the 16's lack of software - it's not our fault.

To an extent, he's right. Yet the same remarks could be applied to the old-style machine, the "PCW Classic", and there are dozens of small coders releasing excellent new programs for that. Many of us would like to work on the PcW 16. Without an assembler, we can't.

There are other matters. There's the ludicrously slow speed of the Rosanne operating system, for one. The icons on the opening screen - the very first thing you see - take several seconds to appear on this 16MHz machine. I had a go at writing an equivalent routine for the 4MHz PCW Classic, and it took under a second. That's how inefficient Rosanne is. One London PcW 16 programmer is currently rewriting its most sluggish components just so that his applications will run at a decent speed. This shouldn't be necessary, and is hardly likely to encourage new development.

Don't get me wrong, I'd love to see more software for the machine. As it happens, I've given Richard Wildey (author of the excellent Inventory Master) an option on a RoutePlanner conversion: as the "PCW Classic" original uses very few CP/M features, conversion to the '16 should be a relatively routine affair. Richard would have a head start in that he already has a PC. I don't, and existing CPC and PCW sales suggest that prospective returns would be too low to pay for one. A shame, as I'd have liked to have got my teeth into a PcW 16 implementation of CP/M, amongst others.

So don't blame existing PCW owners or programmers for the 16's lack of software - it's not our fault.

10 Ways the '16 could have been better

1. Amstrad could have given LocoScript Software more time to develop a new version of LocoScript for the machine.

2. The Rosanne operating system could have been written with CP/M in the background.

3. An assembler should have been produced to enable programmers to easily get at the innards of the '16.

4. A faster processor would have speeded the system up considerably.

5. More customer research should have been commissioned. Amstrad targeted the '16 at first-time buyers but they possibly didn't realise how many owners of 'classic PCWs' would want to upgrade. These people account for a large slice of sales.

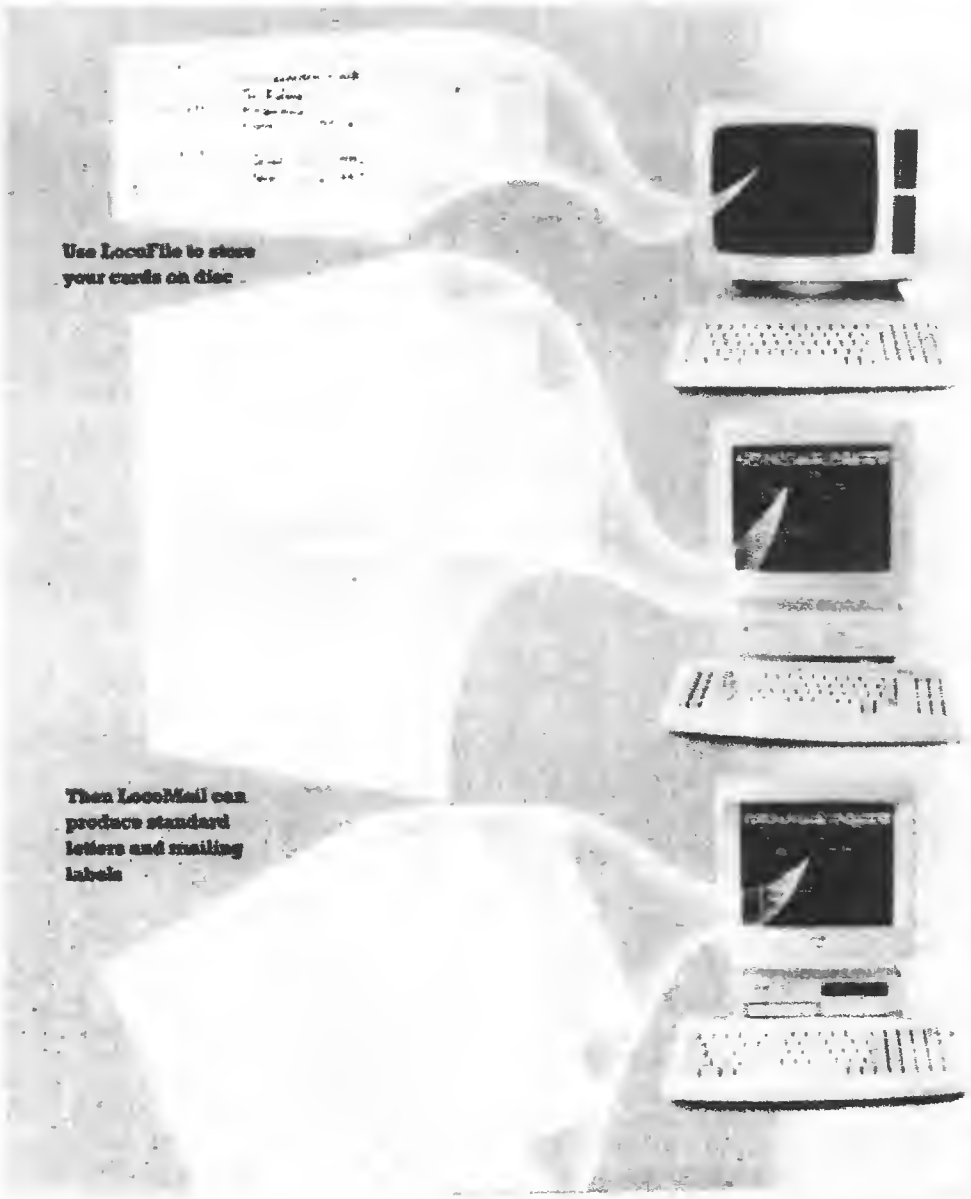
6. Putting the launch date back a further year would probably have resulted in a better all-round system.

7. It should have been possible to program the '16 from the 'classic PCWs' - giving PCW programmers a fresh new market.

8. The PCW series has a reputation for being very reliable. It's a pity the '16 tends to crash rather too often.

9. A little more publicity surrounding the launch would have been good. The only place the '16 has been given any press is in the PCW magazines.

10. Amstrad should consider producing a '16 mark two - taking into account some of the comments above. There is still a market for a budget alternative to the dominant PCs.



LocoFile and LocoMail

LocoFile and LocoMail are available for all models of PCW. Normally LocoFile costs £39.95 and LocoMail £29.95, but as a special offer to PCW Today readers, order LocoFile and get LocoMail free!

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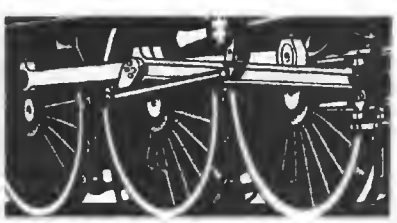

LOCOSCRIPT SOFTWARE

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Phone: 01306 747757
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www.locomotive.com

Cover Disc

You asked for it, so we've given you it. Here's the essential guide to your cover disc.

WE'VE got another jam-packed disc for all you cover disc subscribers this issue and now it's easier to use than ever.

The cover disc server is still there if you want to use it, but many of you complained last time that it was too slow. So now, all the information can now also be viewed in plain text and we've printed the disc directory in the middle of this page so you can see at a glance what is on the disc.

Many of the programs also come with their own on-disc manual, these can be viewed on screen, together with the cover disc information by using our new **HELP** utility. Each of the files listed in the Directory under "Help Files" is a text-only document. Each has the name of the program it refers to and then the suffix .DOC. So, ARCHIVE.DOC is the manual for the utility ARCHIVE.COM.

The only exceptions are LNEWS.DOC and PNOTES.DOC. These are the files that can also be accessed from the graphical cover disc server and they are Late News and Program Notes respectively. The latter now gives details of what each individual program is and what it does.

To view one of these help files, from CP/M, put the cover disc in the drive and type **HELP** then press [RETURN]. You will be prompted to "Enter File:". Simply do as it asks - choose the document you want to view (eg. DU53.DOC) and type in the full name. Remember to include the .DOC suffix and to get the spelling correct. Next hit [RETURN] and the first page of the manual will scroll down the screen. Press [RETURN] again to read the next page and so on.

If you want to print out these files, you can do so by using a word processor that accepts plain ASCII text. Protext or MicroDesign will do the job. but sadly LocoScript won't.

DIRECTORY

MD3 Fonts & Shades	DIRR.COM
INFO5600.MDF	**Games**
SHADE2.MDS	PLUMBING.BAS
LS4 & MD3 Graphics	BURGLAR.BAS
FILENAME.MDA	**Help Files**
Utilities	ARCHIVE.DOC
FASTCOPY.COM	SUPERZAP.DOC
ARCHIVE.COM	DU53.DOC
BACKUP.BAS	LNEWS.DOC
ALTER.COM	PNOTES.DOC
XDATE.COM	POPCOM.DOC
POPCOM.COM	BACKUP.DOC
DISCTOOL.COM	CP/MHELP.DOC
FORMATS.COM	BASICHLP.DOC
DU53.COM	ALTER.DOC
SUPERZAP.COM	FORMATS.DOC

It is advisable to read the help file before trying a program, especially with some of the utilities packages. Some programs do not have a help file, because they are fairly self-explanatory.

Once you have read the program notes, late news and the help files, you will want to try out some of the goodies on the disc. The files come in various different formats but the following are the most important. You can tell them apart by their suffix:

.COM - These are the most common program files and will load direct from CP/M. Just type the name of the file (forget about the suffix) and press [RETURN]. For example, try FASTCOPY [RETURN].

.BAS - These files are also programs, but they must be run from Basic. To make things easy, copy Basic from the CP/M disc onto your cover disc using LocoScript or some other file-copying utility. Once you have done that, type BASIC and press [RETURN]. Once Basic has loaded, type RUN "FILENAME so for example, you might try: RUN "PLUMBING to load the Plumbing game.

.MDA - These are graphics files and can be used with MicroDesign 3 or Release 2 of LocoScript 4. There are 17 pictures on the disc and their theme is history. To find out how to use pictures within MicroDesign or LocoScript, check your user manual. Remember that graphics in Loco 4 must be either on the M: drive, or on the same disc as the document you wish to place them in.

.MDF - These are fonts for use with MicroDesign 3

.MDS - These files are shades for use with MicroDesign 3. You load them from the GRAPHICS screen.

.DOC - We have already covered these files. They are text documents and are usually help files.

There are files on the disc with different suffixes to the ones described here, but they are all files used by other programs and do not concern us. However, do not make the mistake of deleting them. PCWTODAY.001 for example is a vital part of the cover disc server and you will not be able to run the program without it.

For more details about specific programs, see the file - PNOTES.DOC - which can be viewed from **HELP** or the cover disc server - **PCWTODAY.**

We hope that you enjoy the disc and it's many delights. Please let us have your comments and suggestions.

We would also greatly appreciate any public domain or shareware programs you might have for future discs.

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We have tried to simplify our system for levelling your cover disc and magazine subscriptions. Discs cost £1.50 each and four discs now cost £6.00.
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If you subscribe to the cover disc, you should find your copy affixed to the cover of this magazine or loose inside. If your disc is missing, please let us know and if your disc is not working properly, return it to us and we will fix the problem.

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Help File

Send your tips, questions and answers to Help File, PCW Today, 150 Oxford Road, Middlesbrough, Teesside TS5 5EL.

I have a PCW 8256 with an external 3.5" B drive and would appreciate your advice. Is it possible to transfer text files from my SHARP PA-W1200 to LocoScript 4 or CP/M?

The specifications of the Sharp manual state that it supports Word Perfect and MS-DOS text files (ASCII) for exchanging data with the IBM PC and compatible computers.
M. Darke, Woodcote

PCW Today: If your Sharp will convert documents to PC discs in ASCII format, it is possible. LocoScript Software sell a package called Moonstone 2 in 1 that allows the PCW to read DOS format discs. It is a little pricey however at #39.95.

Can anyone please tell me how to connect a Psion Series 3C to the RAMPak/Serial-Parallel interface on the back of my PCW so that I can transfer files in both directions?

I don't suppose that the Parallel Printer link would work - I've not had the courage to try it! Psion market a program and link cable for transfer to a PC. I have in the past put a similar question to Psion concerning the Series 3A but their totally unhelpful answer was that the PCW was little more than a word processor.
S Coutts, France

PCW Today: I'm very much afraid that there is no way to connect the Psion to a PCW - it can be done with a PC but no-one has produced the software for a Psion link. However, if I am wrong, please let me know.

How do you reset the printer after the message, Printer ERROR underun. I have to switch off and reboot.

I am using Print Queue to print two MDA files on A4 paper. I am using a PcW 10 with SCA 512 MiniRam Plus, Standard 9 Pin PcW DMP, The Network and MD3 and Tweak.

The first MDA file loads onto the screen, then it is printed, the second MDA file loads onto the screen - that's when the message appears. My queue is:

*A: FRONT.MDA
*GAP 100
*A: BACK.MDA
*FORMFEED
Alan Petrie, Aberdeen

PCW Today: When we tried to recreate this problem, we spectacularly crashed an 8256 twice and a PcW 10 three times - without discovering the problem. The worrying thing is - we didn't even get as far as printing the first picture out! Can anyone help - please!

A couple of questions that you may be able to help me with:

1. Is there an easy way of stopping the screen on the '16 from refreshing itself?
2. Can the '16 produce a listing of words, as with the drop down on the LocoScript [f7] spell check?
Peter Grant Fream, Surrey

PCW Today: No and no I'm afraid - the first niggle is extremely irritating after a while isn't it!

Because I spend four days a week on the road, I bought a second hand laptop and printers from SCA Hornsea which had PC Easy pre-loaded. I can load LocoFile files from my PCW via LocoLink to the laptop (These have to be squashed before I can use them). But if I wish to change details on the cards, I can transfer the files back but the PCW cannot read them.

Can anybody help?
John Garbutt, King's Lynn

PCW Today: Anybody?

I am writing to you in the hope that you may be able to help me with a problem I am experiencing.

I have to date, three ribbons for my PCW and I wonder if it is possible for you to advise me where i may be able to have two of the ribbons sent to be re-inked.

As the prices in the shops these days cost something around #7 per ribbon to buy and self-inking has got its draw-backs, I would prefer to have them sent off for re-inking if possible, instead of just throwing them in the bin.

As there are no shops in this area that do re-inking, you are my best choice in this matter.
Charles Brannon, Newcastle upon Tyne

PCW Today: There are two companies I can recommend, They are Midas Charity Ink - 01803 853144 and Aladdink - 0131 2293122. Midas advertise in PCW Today, so check their ad for more details.

If, like me, you thought you could print in colour once you had LocoScript 4 and a colour printer, think again.

I bought a new Canon BJC 250 last week, only to find on searching for a suitable printer driver, the following (in somewhat small print) after the appropriate driver: "...but at the time of writing, colour not supported."

So I'm stuck with the black and white and I'm seeing red. But not in my documents.
M Hipwell, Burnley

PCW Today: LocoScript's programmers are always working on new drivers. A few nudges in their direction might encourage them to bring out a colour driver for your printer sooner rather than later.

Can you help please. I am using an EPSON LQ-300 Printer with my PcW 16 and it is possible to update it with a Colour Upgrade Kit. Would I be able to do this - would it be compatible with the PcW 16?
Michael Harris, Southampton

PCW Today: Well you could add the kit, but your PcW will not print out in colour - as yet.

Recently you published a letter from someone that wanted a database for the PcW 16 for 5000 entries. In the same issue of PCW Today, in the PcW 16 section, you published a solution to this problem using the address file. I also required a database to catalogue my record collection and used the address file which I found worked quite well.

I am able to access a record name using the address find function and of course entries are listed alphabetically. I have 200 entries and still have some way to go before my collection is catalogued. I think 5000 entries will certainly be too much for the address file, so it occurred to me to create a word processor document, listing the entries on five lines.

Of course, the entries will not be entered alphabetically but using the "text search" should make them easier to find especially as you can access any of the information entered.
Kevin Boniface, London

I have developed a tip which other users may find useful, as follows.

I find that my Epson LQ-100 printer is not user friendly to the printing of envelopes as one has to stand it up on end and feed the envelope through a slot in the bottom. My solution was to set up the 9512 printer for tractor labels.

I then set up a template which I call LABEL.FIL. Set the margins to 30 left and 60 right I store any addresses on the letters that I produce on Block 0-9 and at the finish of my daily letters run, call up the LABEL.FIL by pressing [f]. I then paste in each address, separating them by [ALT] and [RETURN]. I then CHANGE CORRECT PRINTER [ENTER], then the PRESENT PAPER AND INTENDED PAPER message is displayed. Choose Change to Intended paper [ENTER]. The usual FILL messages appear, select EDIT to correct or to add any additional information.

For best results I find that the paper should be loaded so that the top of the first label should be set level with the Daisy-wheel bar. If further letters are then requires, proceed in the usual way, and on printing you will be invited to change the printer back.
Peter Gough, Cardiff

When I found that Print Screen on the PcW 16 actually did just that, I wondered what on earth the function could be used for until I started to import files from an old PC.

In the routine you are shown a list of files to choose from just like the lists in the file manager, edit or print routines. Print screen then gives you a list of files on paper which are to be copied or not to the PcW. This is particularly helpful as the PcW system asks you to allocate a file name at the start of the process and you can't use the same names as you had on the PC if you don't know what they were.

This has probably been said before but as I have mentioned the file manager, can I say that it took me a while to realise that if I use the folder system more and keep the number of files in each folder down to say ten, I can speed up the process of viewing the files. It is far quicker to skim through folder by folder than it is by scrolling through a massive list of files which click by one at a time.

The moral of the story is to manage the file manager, don't let it manage you.
Jeff Anderson, Bridlington

In the latest issue of *PCW Today* (issue 9), Derrick Gaskin asks a question about the transfer of files from ForeWord to Loco-Script 4 - loaded into the foreground.

As an extensive user of this type of set up, which is a considerable aid to writing, and currently being in the process of upgrading some of my Loco start of day discs to the latest version, it naturally attracted my attention.

Like your questioner, my version of ForeWord is vI.I5 which I understand was the last available, this program appears to be one of those to have disappeared from the scene, so my findings are pertinent to the discussion. After trying several different possibilities of using the built in A, B and M drives on my 9512+, including saving the file in SOFT ASCII format from within ForeWord before inserting it into a new LocoScript 4 document.

I can report that in each case, although the file will save without difficulty. it cannot be successfully edited until LocoScript has been reloaded. Any attempt to do so producing the error message already reported.

It would therefore appear that your suspicion about the changed structure of LocoScript affecting the way ForeWord reads the discs is correct and the obvious solution appears to be to keep at least one copy of LS3 if you use this type of set-up frequently.

ForeWord is an excellent program as far as it goes, but I agree with you, and admit the transfer facility is notorious for making a mess of things. I NEVER use this facility if the work requiring transfer is no longer than about 700 words, preferring to save as a SOFT ASCII file which can be inserted into a Loco document. Not only is this more accurate, but it often proves a more speedy process.
Dareen Bridge, Huddersfield

The Technique PCW 102 keyboard for my modified 8256 recently developed a problem, the keys ENTER and EXIT proving very different to effect.

A remedy was achieved by disassembling the unit and then bonding approximately circular pieces of silver kitchen foil onto the underside of the keys, directly onto the existing silver discs attached to the foam rubber cushion which forms a buffer between key and circuit board.

Kitchen foil has excellent electrical continuity whereas the existing silver discs appear to have none, hence a logical explanation of the repair is beyond me. However, the keyboard is now as good as new.

Other readers may be able to rejuvenate an otherwise 'dud' keyboard.
Mike Trueman, Surrey

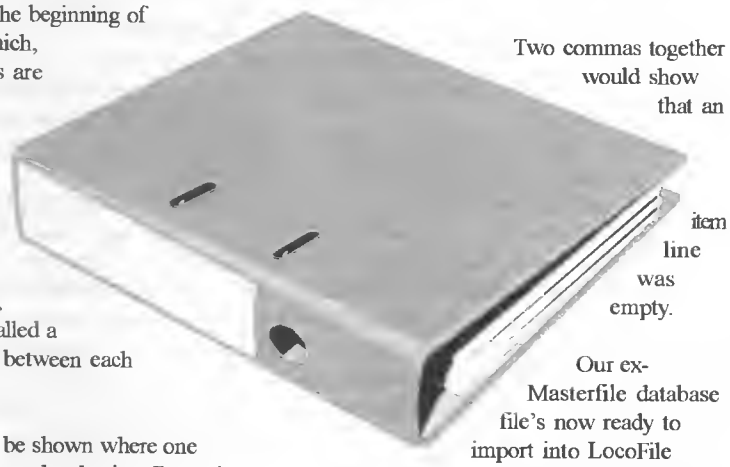
Export duty

Switching to a new database is a bit like moving home - it too can be very stressful. Rod Shinkfield hopes to make things easier with this step by step guide

A MASTERFILE database file must be changed to ASCII before it will import into LocoScript. Once in LocoScript it can be viewed by inserting the text into an empty document.

MasterFile asks questions when readying a file for exporting and, depending on your answers, it may look like the two example records shown in figure one, taken from my CANDIS.MFC as viewed in LocoScript.

A &A marks the beginning of the first item which, (Following items are marked &B. &C, &D, and so on.) Each item is enclosed within a pair of double quotation marks, and a comma (called a separator) is put between each item.



LocoFile must be shown where one record ends and another begins. Returning to figure one again, the next thing is to separate each record. Put "&A in FIND, and put a return marker followed by a single double quotation mark in EXCHANGE. The ticked default settings of Ignore case and Preserve case can be ignored. Set Automatic exchange and press [ENTER].

Return to the start once the exchange has been made and put &? in FIND leaving EXCHANGE blank. After ticking Use wild cards set Auto exchange and press [ENTER]. The example records (once an unwanted return marker at the start has been removed) should look like figure two.

Besides the comma separator, there's a double quotation mark either side of the comma, making three separators - only one is needed.

Either strip out all the double quotations leaving a single comma separator, or we can fool LocoFile by using a dummy item (see LocoFile User Guide for details).

Stripping out the quotations is the easiest method.

Leaving the seventh item line COMMENT blank means that any unwanted commas will print on the seventh line instead. Reducing the commas between the page number and return marker to one means the COMMENT item line remains clear. Typing anything between the return marker and the single comma will print within the item line.

Two commas together would show that an item line was empty.

Our ex-Masterfile database file's now ready to import into LocoFile where it will be renamed as CANDIS.DAT (DAT meaning data, ie, main file). But first we must set up a LocoFile Card Pattern and a Record Pattern.

Let's deal with the Record Pattern first (CANDIS.REC). The original MasterFile file was called CANDIS.MFC, and each record had seven fields. Open a LocoScript document and type in the field names used in the original MasterFile file. Avoid spaces between a field name by using the underline _ character, especially if LocoMail may be used in the future. The Record Pattern for our example records is shown in figure four and saved as CANDIS.REC.

To set up a Card Pattern (CANDIS.PAT), in LocoScript's Disc Manager, press f1, [C], and [ENTER] twice to go into LocoFile's Create LocoFile Data.

A card will appear on the screen with a default size of columns 1/60, and lines 1/15. This size can be altered, see LocoFile User Guide for details. Move the cursor onto col 15 and line 3 (Info shown top right). Press the set-on key [+] found left of space bar.

Press the right cursor to move to col 59, and press [ENTER]. A menu will appear on which the first item name CATEGORY is typed in. Move cursor to Place at 1 o'clock (default setting) and press the number nine key, and [ENTER] twice.

The word CATEGORY should appear left of the line allocated for item details. Move the cursor down one line and, still in col 15, press [+] again and move the cursor back to col 15 (line 4) and press [ENTER].

You can set out item lines in either direction. Type TITLE this time and again change the 11 o'clock to 9 o'clock and press [ENTER] twice. The TITLE item line has joined the CATEGORY item line. Repeat the above until the remaining five item lines have been set up. Press [EXIT] and record 1 appears top left of card. Press [EXIT] again to leave LocoFile. When setting up the card if an error warning of overlapping items appears, accept Try again and check that the position number reads 9 o'clock.

We are now ready to import into LocoFile - but first a warning. Copy your Card Pattern (CANDIS.PAT), Record Pattern (CANDIS.REC), and the Datafile.Dat (CANDIS.DAT) onto a disc and back them up too.

When working on any LocoFiles copy them onto the memory drive, and overwrite files saved on the disc only when certain everything has been correctly merged.

To merge, in Disc Manager, put the cursor on the Card Pattern and press f1, [R] for run LocoFile, and [ENTER] twice. When the expected card appears, press f1 and choose Insert text and [ENTER] twice. A merge menu appears. move cursor to Record Pattern and press [ENTER] twice, then move cursor to Datafile.Dat and press [ENTER] twice.

If everything has been done correctly, all MasterFile records should merge successfully into LocoFile.

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Basic98

Basic98

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Time Bomb!

When Big Ben strikes twelve on the eve of December 31st, 1999, the whole world will be partying. But could a simple computer fault cause chos around the globe? And how will the humble PCW be affected by this millennium bug? Adrian Braddy investigates

Every one of history's most famous prophets have predicted chaos when we move into the new millennium in a couple of years time.

Fortune tellers like Nostradamus and Mother Shipton and even the Old Testament have all warned of a doomsday disaster when we hit the millennium. They all disagree over what will actually happen but it's pretty clear that it's not going to be too pleasant.

Now we might all sneer at such statements - after all there is usually a fair amount of hysteria surrounding important dates but in fact in this case, they could be closer to the truth than you might imagine. Chaos could ensue in 2000, because of a simple computer fault.

When we reach the millennium, many computers will not recognise the date change and will either shut down in confusion or revert to an earlier date.

The problem is that most computers were programmed to accept the last two digits of a date. By dropping the first two figures, huge amounts of program space and money was saved.

Unfortunately, nobody thought about what would happen when we reached the millennium. The digits 00 are enough to flummox even the most advanced machine.

So when the clocks move from 11.59 1999 to 00.00 2000, many computers will think that it is either 1900 or 1980 and may even crash permanently. Millions of home PCs running DOS will be affected, as the date change may well affect their machine. But there are even wider implications.

A supermarket chain reportedly found that it was dumping thousands of tins of tomatoes, due to be sold by the year 05, because the computerised system classified them as expired.

In Derbyshire and Cambridgeshire, police have cancelled all leave for new year 2000 in anticipation of the potential chaos. Many everyday objects could be affected. Anything that has an internal clock-based computer could go wrong. Traffic lights may stop working, burglar alarms will go off and street lighting could fail.

Many computers will not recognise the millennium date change and will shut down in confusion

In the home, you are bound to be affected. Video recorders, microwave ovens, digital watches and alarm clocks all have small computers that could be affected by the deadly millennium bug.

And if you were thinking of getting away to escape the bug, be warned. Today's cars have as many as 30 embedded computers, several of which may well have internal date-stamped logs that will be affected.

Perhaps the scariest problems could arise in our hospitals. In a letter to all NHS trusts, Alan Langlands, and executive of the NHS said: "There could be serious disruption to the NHS in the year 2000 unless urgent pre-emptive action is taken now. In extreme circumstances, failure or malfunction of equipment could be life threatening."

Systems which recall people for breast and cervical cancer screening may well malfunction.

Bruce Koball, a millennium bug expert is worried by the problem. He said: "Infusion pumps for patient-controlled painkilling use a special time-date chip that has a two-year digital field. In such a device, which is used to give patients control over their pain medication, the time-date chip ensures that a patient can't overdose. After the millennium, the device could refuse the patient any pain relief.

The cost of fixing the millennium bug will be huge. The government agency, Taskforce 2000 predict that the figure could be as high as £31 billion. Barclays and NatWest have both set aside £100m to deal with the year 2000 crisis.

Royal & Sun Alliance intend to spend £58 million on the bug this year. A spokesman said: "We need to update all our

systems by the end of the year because all our policies run for a year. We estimate that the IT work will require 540 man years of effort."

Unilever, the food and toiletries group said that the 2000 problem would cost them around £300 million. Reuters, the news wire has estimated it will cost them over £70 million to fix the bug.

The government is concerned that many companies are either ignoring the millennium problem, or leaving it to the last minute before addressing it. Figures show that a staggering 45 per cent of British businesses have yet to even consider the implications of the bug.

Meanwhile, the experts are warning the public to get ready for any difficulties, should they arise. Alisdair Kemp, the Year 2000 Programme Officer Advisor for the Institute of Electrical Engineers advised: "Have contingency plans and be prepared for the possibility that some things might not work."

However, panicking might not be a very good idea, as Mr Kemp points out: "We can make problems much worse for ourselves, for example, what happens if we all withdraw cash reserves and the banks crash?"

So what of the PCW? Will your humble little computer survive while all hell breaks loose around it? Quite surprisingly, the answer as a rule, is yes. Whilst your video recorder or digital watch might commit suicide, your PCW will not crash.

Like its successor DOS, the PCW operating system, CP/M has got the millennium bug. It was never intended for the PCW to see the millennium out - Alan Sugar, canny-businessman that he is, probably intended us all to have bought one of his PCs by now. Whatever the reason, CP/M's DATE.COM will not accept dates beyond December 31, 1999.

Luckily, this should not trouble you too much, unless you are one of those people who mark their files with Date/Time stamps.

The CP/M BIOS clock, when set, holds the date in the form of 'the number of days since 0/1/1978' as a 16 bit number. This means that there is enough capacity to carry on for about another 100 years. A problem arises because the command procedure DATE.COM does not allow dates beyond the millennium to be set and DATE.COM, DIR.COM and SHOW.COM are incapable of showing dates where the year is beyond 1999.

There are bug-fixed versions of each of these utilities available in the public domain, so if you want to , you can solve the problem. The good news is though, CP/M's bug will not crash your system as the bug in DOS does.

The PcW 16 even recognises that the year 2000 is a leap year.

LocoScript is completely unaffected - it cannot date stamp files and never really bothers with dates in any of its functions. LocoFile however, assumes that it is the 20th Century when sorting two-digit years - this should not be to much of a problem in most cases.

The biggest problems come with mathematical software. All SD MicroSystems software which includes Personal Ledger, Business Ledger and Small Trader, has been re-programmed to fix the bug. Connect Software's Money Manager has also been made safe.

The Rocket spreadsheet was programmed by forward thinkers and it will accept four-digit years up to December 31, 2097. It calculates dates by counting from December 31, 1919, with the first day of 1920 as day one. If you enter two-digit dates, the years 20 to 99 are assumed to be in the 20th Century and 00 to 19 are the 21st. Since, realistically, there won't be many PCWs left in 2020 (I will be proved wrong I know it!), this should be sufficient.

Other mathematics software has got the bug however. Programs like MiniOffice and SuperCalc do not recognise figures past the big new year. As these programs are no longer supported, you will probably just have to put up with the bug and avoid including dates in your calculations.

Unlike the classic PCWs, the new PcW 16 has got an internal clock that runs whilst the computer is switched off and it is an integral part of the operating system - there is even a date-sensitive alarm clock. However, the Amstrad programmers wrote Rosanne long after CP/M and DOS. They spotted the millennium problem coming and wrote bug-free software accordingly. It even recognises that the year 2000 is a leap year - another problem faced by other computers.

The PcW 16 clock still works with two figure dates, but unlike its predecessors, the clock runs from January 1, 1980 to December 31, 2079. Any years between 80 and 99 are read by the '16 as being in the 20th Century, whilst it assumes that the dates 00 to 79 are in the 21st. However, even after 2079 the clock seems to run on without a problem - you just can't reset it.

The year is not shown on the Desktop screen, to see that you must enter the diary where the day's date is shown in full at the bottom of the page. And the diary itself is actually accurate up to the amazing February 28, 2100 - so if you want to plan ahead you can! You can also go back in time as far as March 1, 1900 incidentally. Don't try any further back - your computer won't like it!

The PCW may be an antiquated and obsolete machine, but it can still deal with a simple date change better than a new-fangled PC can. Who needs Windows?

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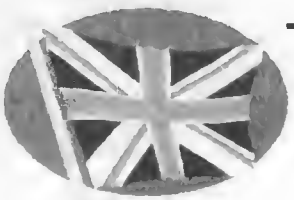

The Great British Word Processor!

Protext in its CP/M version is the fastest and most complete word processor on the Amstrad PCW. On one disc, the program features include:

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- Free user support is included in the purchase price, and the Protext helpline operates (at normal 'phone rates during evenings and weekends
- Protext handles printing in columns with ease
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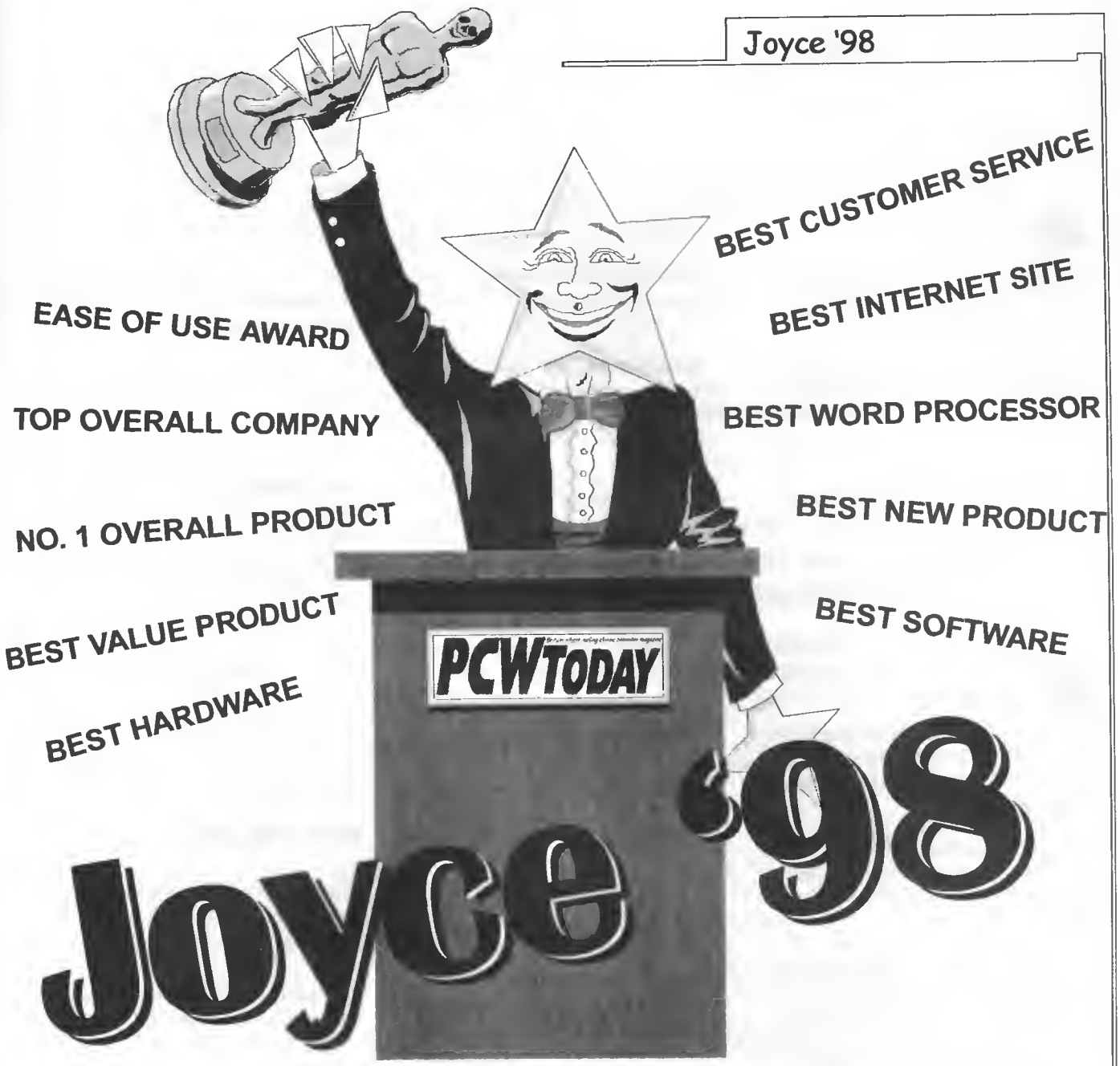
- Protext can easily produce ASCII files to let you transfer between computers, either by software or for e-mail purposes
- The Free Protext User's Club is available to all Protext users for the open exchange of tips, templates and information

Protext v2.23 has had 12 years of continuous development. Despite being highly developed, above all, it is very fast and the user friendly 'look and feel' of the program has been maintained throughout its development. Because of Protext's wide range of useful features, it is impossible to cover everything here. but further information is available if you send an A4 SAE to Brian Watson at Protext Software, *Harrowden*, 39 High Street, Sutton-in-the-Isle, ELY, Cambridgeshire CB6 2RA. Alternatively, you can phone 01353 777006 (from 7-9pm weekdays, or any time at weekends)

CP/M Protext, the one-disc word processing solution, costs just £25. It is available from the above address or from ComSoft, 10 McIntosh Court, Wellpark, Glasgow G31 2HW. Orders may be placed by phone on 0141 5544735, qoting your credit card details. Please state the computer model and your drive A: size when ordering.



The stars of the PCW industry are honoured in our third annual people's choice awards

HELLO and welcome to the third annual Joyce Awards, live from sunny Middlesbrough.

This year, for the second time, all the winners have been voted by *PCW Today* readers and they hopefully show a true representation of public opinion. So if you don't agree with the results - you've got nobody to blame but yourself.

The grand auditorium is filled with PCW stars from screen, drive and keyboard. Howard Fisher has taken his usual position at the table nearest the stage - so he won't have to keep walking backwards and forwards to pick-up LocoScript's obligatory armful of awards.

Steve Denson is close by, with Nik Holmes of Creative, they are deep in a discussion about the PcW 16. Ian MacDonald has flown across from Holland for the new Internet award and baffles everyone by refusing to talk in anything other than HTML.

At the Amstrad table, Alan Sugar and Clff Lawson are cracking open a bottle of champagne - no, they haven't won an award yet - they've just heard that Amstrad's share price has risen two points.

Towards the back of the hall, the *PCW Today* table is the scene of much merriment - this is the first time any of the team has actually met any of their colleagues. David Langford and David Landers are moaning that no-one can ever tell them apart, whilst everyone else is busy asking P.D. Blake - just what do those mysterious initials stand for?

Peter Campbell and Brian Watson arrive late, hopeful that a large swell of support will have swayed the Protext vote at the last minute - but apart from that, there's free food and booze going.

The music has started up and the spot-lights are moving across the audience.

It's time for the Joyce Awards 1998 to begin, so turn the page as we reveal this year's winners and losers.

Best Internet Site

Winner: Ian MacDonald *(62%)*
Runner-up: PCW Today *(15%)*
Last year: N/A

The only real surprise here was that PCW Today On-line came second - despite not being particularly good!

Ian Macdonald's Amstrad PCW Pages stormed away with it and deservedly so. Ian's pages are mostly descriptive links to just about every PCW web site under the sun.

There is also loads of fantastic software to download and all of Ian's Comms Corner columns from *PCW Plus*.

These are the first Joyce awards with a Net category, recognising the growing importance of the web today.

There are many PCW and CP/M related sites and discussion groups dotted along the information superhighway and they are well worth a visit.

You can find Ian MacDonald's site at www.caliban.org/PCW and it makes a great starting point to the Internet. You'll find a link to PCW Today On-line from there.

Best Word Processor

Winner: LocoScript 4 *(57%)*
Runner-up: LocoScript 3 *(21%)*
Last year: LocoScript 4

What can we say - this was a bit of a LocoScript white-wash, with the Dorking gang not only winning it but coming second too!

Despite very valiant protests from the Protext corner, LocoScript has once again established itself as the leading PCW word processor.

With graphics, scalable fonts, colour and columns, LocoScript 4 is hard to beat in the whole world of computers, never mind just the PCW world!

The large LocoScript 3 vote went against our prediction last year that it would have sunk without site by now, but many users have obviously made the decision not to upgrade just yet. We even had some votes for LocoScript 2, although the long-obsolete Loco I failed to pull a single vote.

Protext and the PcW 16 internal word processor got a creditable 8% of the vote each.

Amstrad will be pleased that users voted for the much-maligned '16 word processor.

Best Customer Service

Winner: LocoScript Software *(36%)*
Runner-up: SD MicroSystems *(25%)*
Last year: SD MicroSystems

This one was a close-run thing with SD MicroSystems struggling to hold onto the award it won last year. In the end, LocoScript Software won through - just.

LocoScript have to be commended to the way they still continue to support the machine.

This year has seen another glossy LocoScript catalogue, crammed with goodies that cover all aspects of PCW life.

Products bought from LocoScript are always despatched quickly and any problems are dealt with promptly. The friendly staff are always ready to help and LocoScript run a user support line.

In second place, the smaller SD MicroSystems, prides itself on being a friendly company.

All software comes with a period of free customer support and the company also offer a subscription based support scheme, which includes offers, a regular newsletter and a free subscription to *PCW Today*.

This wasn't just a two horse race however. Former winners, Creative Technology were not far behind,

Ease of Use Award

Winner: LocoScript 4 *(35%)*
Runner-up: PcW 16 *(14%)*
Last year: N/A

This award pulled in the biggest number of nominations, with Money Manager and MicroDesign proving popular. However, there could be only one winner. Yes, you guessed it, LocoScript 4 did it again.

LocoScript has always been acclaimed for its simplicity and now that it is one of the most advanced software packages of its kind, it is still user-friendly. The now-famous keyboard activated menus and code insertions have made LocoScript one of the most successful word processors of all time.

The PcW 16 came second and it deserved to. The Rosanne operating system is probably the simplest ever written.

Graphical icons, extensive on-line help and colour coordinated keys mean that even a true beginner can soon master Amstrad's latest offering.

Best Software

Winner: MicroDesign 3 *(31%)*
Runner-up: LocoScript 4 *(28%)*
Last year: N/A

This was the closest of all the awards, with those two old rivals MD3 and LS4 battling it out for the crown of best software.

With a lead of just three per cent, the desktop publisher pipped the word processor at the post.

Creative Technology's masterpiece has always been classed as one of the "big two" along with LocoScript when it comes to PCW software.

The package, which rivals the leading PC desktop publishers for its simplicity and range of features, is possibly the most powerful software currently on the market for the PCW.

For quite some time, *PCW Today* was produced using MicroDesign and many other publications still swear by it as a publishing tool - quite remarkable for a machine that was originally only intended to replace the typewriter.

Best New Product

Winner: Loco 4 Rel 2 *(60%)*
Runner-up: RoutePlanner *(20%)*
Last year: LocoScript 4 Rel 1

LocoScript being LocoScript, they managed to win this award two year's running with the same product. Well not quite.

Release Two of LocoScript 4 brought powerful new graphics features to the package.

For the first time, a PCW word processor enabled users to include pictures in their documents.

People upgraded in their thousands, taking LocoScript Central by surprise. It is no wonder users voted this the best new product of the year.

RoutePlanner was the other huge release of the year. This highly impressive program is one of the best-ever PCW products - any other year it would have won this award by a mile.

Top Overall Company

Winner: LocoScript *(54%)*
Runner-up: SD Micro *(29%)*
Last year: LocoScript Software

Weighed down with all these Joyce awards, LocoScript knew this one was an almost cert.

There is no question that they are the number one PCW company - at least our readers seem to think so.

LocoScript Software are quite simply the biggest PCW operation around.

They have large premises, a glossy catalogue, a huge mailing list, telephone support and they are still developing their software. It all adds up to the ultimate product.

LocoScript now sell everything from printer ribbons to disc drives and from word processors to desktop publishers. There range of PCW mail order produce is second to none.

SD MicroSystems came second for their large range of PCW software and hardware and excellent customer support.

Best Hardware

Winner: Flash Drive *(30%)*
Runner-up: Black Box *(21%)*
Last year: Flash Drive

Another year, another hardware award for Cirtech's revolutionary Flash Drive.

The tiny box that plugs into the back of your PCW acts like the PcW 16 cabinet.

It is a solid-state drive and you can store programs and files on it and they become almost instantly accessible. All that and it costs a fraction of the price of a hard drive.

This year the Flash Drive had some new and unexpected competition in the form of the Black Box disc drive from SD MicroSystems. Creative Technology's KeyMouse wasn't far behind either.

Best Value Product

Winner: Black Box disc drive *(24%)*
Runner-up: PcW 16 *(14%)*
Last year: MicroDesign 3

This has been a good year for the surprise hit - the Black Box.

It has picked up three Joyces and received rave reviews from users.

Launched by SD MicroSystems as a budget 3.5" disc drive, it immediately filled a niche in the market.

Customers snapped it up - brand new disc drives at under fifty quid are a rarity!

Its success has shocked the traditional hardware suppliers - let's hope they are forced into retaliation and cut their prices.

Amstrad's very own PcW 16 attracted a lot of votes and why not. It was already a bargain machine - cheaper than all its rivals

But the crazily low price Dixons has dropped it to means that many traditional PCW users have been persuaded to buy one as a back-up machine.

No. 1 Overall Product

Winner: LocoScript 4 *(58%)*
Runner-up: =Black Box disc drive *(7%)*
=PcW 16 *(7%)*
Last year: MicroDesign 3

The all-conquering LocoScript 4 did a Titanic this year, winning five Joyces, whilst LocoScript Software won a total of eight awards!

This fantastic product shook the PCW world to its roots when it was launched - giving the Amstrad market the kiss of life it needed with the death of *PCW Plus*. With the second release of LocoScript, the word processor truly became an all-encompassing product.

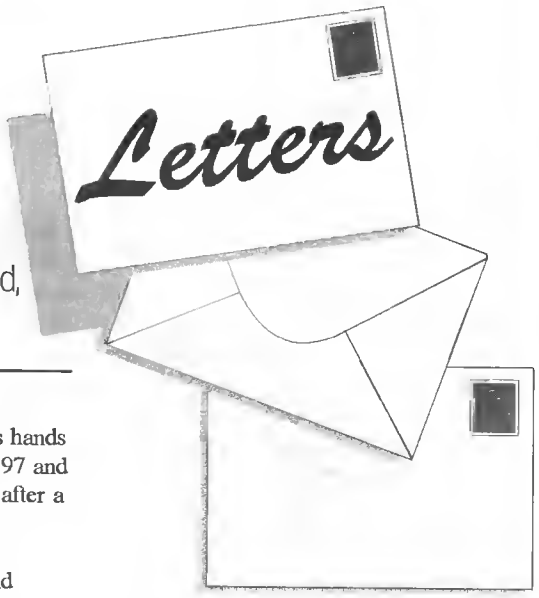
The Loco family can now boast word processing, desktop publishing, mail merging and a database - how many suites can beat that?

Using LocoScript 4 and a colour printer, users can now produce fantastic looking documents that they could never have dreamed of when the PCW was launched back in 1985.

Pictures, scalable fonts, colour, columns, boxes - all these things were made possible by LocoScript 4. The ultimate PCW product.

Let's not forget the winners of the second place Joyce award. Both the PcW 16 and the new Black Box disc drive from SD MicroSystems got seven per cent of the vote for their all round excellence. MicroDesign 3 was strangely nowhere to be seen.

the mailbag



Send your letters to me: The Editor, PCW Today, 150 Oxford Road, Middlesbrough, Teesside TS5 5EL and you could win a prize!

PRIZE LETTER

Wins a computer copy-holder

ALTHOUGH I'm a *PCW Today* reader, I haven't felt able to participate in the Joyce '98 nominations as I have only ever used LocoScript for word processing and LocoScript Software is the only listed PCW supplier I have had contact with.

I find LocoScript excellent and have never felt the need to use any other system, however, not having tried any other I have nothing to compare it with. Likewise I have found the people at LocoScript Software really helpful and efficient - and I have had some invaluable help from their technical support department. There may be other companies on your list which are just as good - but I doubt if there are any that are better.

Having said that, I must also speak up for another major supplier of PCW hardware, peripherals and software to whom I am indebted for introducing me to the wonders of word processing - and that is the humble car boot sale.

I bought my first PCW out of curiosity at a boot sale from someone who was selling an 8256 with LocoScript 1 for £20 and I soon became hooked. I was perfectly happy using LocoScript 1 for a couple of years and though it's old hat compared to the current programs I still believe it's a very impressive bit of kit in its own right. My next boot sale purchase was another 8256 for £20 complete with a power pack and LocoScript 3 (which I didn't know existed) and a comprehensive collection of books and instruction manuals.

But my piece de resistance - the machine I am writing this on - is an 8512 which came complete with printer and keyboard and cost me the grand sum of three quid. The previous owner wanted it off his hands as nobody in his family used it and it was taking up valuable space. Feeling benevolent. I gave him £3 and took it off his hands for him! That was in the summer of '97 and it's still in tip-top working condition after a year of daily use.

At the beginning of this year I found myself in a financial position where I was able to indulge my love affair with word processing and step into the 90s with an upgrade to a system using up-to-date technology. I toyed with the idea of getting a PC but felt that would be a waste of money if all I was going to use it for was writing letters, poetry and the like. And I had no desire to get tangled in the Web or beaten at Yahtzee by my grandchildren.

I looked at some of the new portable word processors with built-in bubble jet printers. I was even attracted by the price of PCW 16s but every one I saw in different high street shops looked shoddy and shop-soiled - and older and tattier than anything I'd bought second hand from a car boot sale. (Having read about them in *PCW Today*, am I glad I didn't buy one!).

But in the end I decided to stick with my PCW 8512 (better the devil you know etc.) and to overcome its only drawback - the quality and speed of its printer - by investing in an Epson Stylus 600 and LocoScript 4.

What a splendid set-up I have now! A user-friendly system which is far easier to boot-up and use than any costly multi-media PC. quality printing and presentation, graphics and colour.

I want to get a spare PCW in case the one I'm using should die or need replacement parts and I've no doubt there'll be plenty of them knocking about at this year's boot sales; only last weekend I had to pass up an 8512 going for a fiver as I was on my motorbike and had no way of getting it home.

It's obviously not going to please some suppliers knowing that the goods they are trying to sell can be picked up for next to nothing at boot sales but if anyone, like me, does buy one and use it, at least there is going to be a continual demand for software, upgrades, rubber belts and so on.

Finally, to redress the balance slightly, I became friendly with another PCW 8512 user recently but sadly he died just after I met him. He swore by Protext and had no time for LocoScript; we were going to get together and do a comparison but events didn't permit that to happen. So I suppose it's horses for courses. what suits one doesn't necessarily suit the next man. But let there be no doubt about this - for those of us who know what's good for us, nothing is ever going to replace the good old Amstrad PCW.

Terry Donovan, Chesham

***PCW Today**: The car boot sale is always a treasure trove for PCW users - second hand discs can often be picked up for chicken-feed. There is always the risk that you will get a bargain PCW home, to find it doesn't work - be careful!*

get it right

A FRIEND of mine, knowing that I still use my Amstrad, showed me your magazine which is generally most impressive. So what a pity that it is let down by spelling/grammar errors (eg. seperate instead of separate), and the factually incorrect piece entitled "Rod on LocoScript, Get your letters in order".

I appreciate that this is the fifth part of a tutorial and I may have missed something in an earlier article but, nevertheless, I do hope that no-one attempts to follow the instructions as given.

Third paragraph: "press [f4] to reveal the size, pitch and spacing menu. You can, of course use any font and size you wish." Then use [f2] afterwards to set up a new layout? That new layout immediately overrules anything set previously! [f2] should have been pressed first - or, better still, press [f1] for Document Setup and do the job properly. That's the best method, particularly for a template. Putting a right margin at 85 is nonsense if the Ruler Line is correctly set, with its scale pitch 'in step' with the pitch size for the document. 85 is actually the extreme right-hand edge of an A4 sized sheet when scale pitch coincides with character pitch - as it should.

In using the template, the author seems to assume that one press of [PARA] will drop several lines down the page - only true if he hasn't bothered to set up a `CR extra`, so this tip won't work for more advanced LocoScripters.

Holding the salutation was, I imagine, covered in a previous article, as "Yours sincerely" and Yours faithfully" aren't standard phrases on the LocoScript master discs. Incidentally, pressing [+], [C] won't add a (CEntre) code, you need to press [+], [C], [E] for that. And why on earth wasn't that done first, rather than taking the cursor back to the start of the line after pasting the salutation?

Sorry to be so negative but I hate to see people led up the garden path.
Shirley Whitfield, Carlisle

PCW Today: Thanks for correcting us. As you say, some of the points were explained in previous tutorials, but the rest were genuine slip-ups.

Disc points

I WAS pleased to receive the cover disc with the latest issue of *PCW Today*. Although I am not particularly interested in the games, DISCTOOL looks as though it will be very useful.

You asked for comments and suggestions:

1. The cover disc browser (PCW TODAY.COM) is extremely frustrating. It takes about 20 seconds to display the first screen (and my PCW has a Sprinter), which would be OK, except that you have to wait for another 20 seconds when you return from each of the two information files and the directory. Please could this be simplified?

2. It would be very helpful to have more information about the contents of the cover disc, preferably in *PCW Today*, or failing that on the disc itself. I agree that they are mostly self-explanatory, but you have to guess, for example, that NORMAL.COM reverts SERIF.COM, and you have to try DIRR.COM to see what it does.

3. For future discs, it would be very useful to have a program to store PCW files on 3.5" discs in PC format, so that I can transfer files to my PC at work, and a program to read files in PC format for transfers the other way

4. Some Comms programs would be very useful too, as the Communications part of Mini Office is not very good.

5. You might also like to include MENU.COM and NSWP.COM, both of which I use all the time.

Your magazine continues to improve and is an excellent replacement for *PCW Plus;* in fact it is a lot better than the last few issues of that magazine.
Peter Edwards, Edinburgh

Thanks a lot

I HAVE only recently purchased a 9512 and it was recommended that I might like to subscribe to *PCW Today*.

Having acted on that recommendation, I find the magazine is invaluable to a newcomer like myself.

It is through the magazine that I have been able to progress and enhance my usage of the 9512. I expect to subscribe to this magazine for (hopefully) a very long time.

I would also like to thank the various people that have helped me, particularly Kathleen Thorpe, Aldyth Scott and the people at LocoScript, Creative Technology and SD MicroSystems. All the time that *PCW Today* exists and there are the very people around that are prepared to take a genuine interest in the PCW owners, then I am sure that one can look forward to a good few years yet, before one has to enter the impersonal world of the Pentium.
P.G. Collins, Derbyshire

PCW Today: Few machines can boast the levels of friendly support that the PCW has always had.

Crashed out

I SAW a letter from a John Williams in issue 8 on page 22.

Like him, I brought the 1.04 version of the PcW 16. Also like him, I experienced regular crashes of the system. I took it back to Currys and requested a replacement. This was grudgingly given by a senior member of staff who kept muttering about it being a 'user problem'. The version I received in exchange was 1.06.

This model showed exactly the same tendency to crash but I decided to persevere in the hope that the problem would right itself. Later I learned that an update disc had been issued - 1.11. At the time I was in communication with Cliff Lawson who was kind enough to send me the update disc.

I telephoned LocoScript about my regular breakdown but all they could advise was: 'Switch off at the wall plug, wait a few minutes and switch on again.' This, of course, didn't replace the lost screen data. And I am still getting the occasional crash.

I telephoned the number John Williams mentioned in his letter about an update to version 1.12, to be told that the telephone number had changed. I went through a series of numbers until I reached one connecting me with CPC (whatever that is!). A very helpful young lady checked the records on her computer and said there was no mention of this latest update. However, she promised to enquire (with Amstrad) and took my name, address and telephone number. That was yesterday, and to date I have no further information.

It doesn't seem very helpful on the part of Amstrad to limit their information about the issue of update discs to those purchasers of the PcW 16 who also have Internet facilities. There must be quite a large number who do not.
Steve Braithwaite, Lincoln

PCW Today: It is a little odd - Amstrad seem to think everyone has an Internet connection! On balance, it seems that the Dixons technical support number - 0870 9013000 is the best bet for updates.

PC downgrade

HERE is somebody who was coerced into an upgrade to PC and now regrets it.

The institution for which I produce a newsletter persuaded me to get in-line with their IT department so as to be compatible and be able to read the copy they insist on sending me on disc.

This I did and I had to change my whole editorial format to accommodate the deficiencies of the world's best-selling word processing program. LocoScript users should hang on to what they have got. Similarly, for desktop publishing, there is nothing in the same class as MicroDesign for simplicity and effect.

Just to be cussed, I have typed this letter on my original 1985 PCW 8256 outfit, which I shall retain for private use.

So, may I warn my fellow *PCW Today* readers not to upgrade to PC without knowing exactly what they are doing and, furthermore, to shop around for programs - especially among those of your advertisers who produce just the right sort of user-friendly stuff needed by private computer owners.
James Newby, Norwich

'16 cover discs

AS A SUBSCRIBER to your *PCW Today* magazine, I am so disappointed that you have not produced a cover disc for the PcW 16 - WHY NOT!

After all of the articles where you have covered the PcW 16, and the SOS campaign, of which all say that *PCW Today* support the PcW 16. I feel you should be supporting this excellent machine by producing a cover disc.

I just hope that my letter is one of many and as proud owners of the PcW 16, we will be able to change your decision.

Please produce a cover disc for the '16.
Samantha Wilson, Walsall

***PCW Today:** There are no '16 cover discs for the simple reason that there is nothing to put on them. The CP/M disc that we currently produce is made up of public domain software - there is no such software available yet for the '16.*

Could do better

WELL, I've had that first cover disc and have been trying it out for quite a while. But I regret to say that I am not impressed!

Mind you, I am still working with LocoScript 3, so can't comment on all those programs which are particularly designed to work with MicroDesign and LocoScript 4. They may be wonderful. I shall have to find the necessary cash to upgrade.

But some of those others! For instance, how does one get into PCWTODAY.001 and .002? PCWTODAY.COM comes up alright but no way can I find the means of access to .001 and .002.

You say in "Cover Discs" on the centre column of page 35 of the last issue: "From here you can access two information files..." But how?

To be a thorough-going nit-picking half-wit, the errors in the display advertisement on Page 19 - not your direct responsibility - do not fill me with absolute confidence in the compilation of "A Feast of Fun".

Correspondence with other people - I'm a "country" or "postal" member of a club - indicates that members far more intelligent that myself and more accustomed to working in CP/M have similar feelings.

But for all that, I am glad to have taken up that extra subscription. Perhaps the next issue of *PCW Today* will clarify these points and the next disc will be better.
Harold Simmons, Wallingford

***PCW Today:** Sorry you aren't happy. It was our first attempt and we know now that full instructions should have been included. PCWTODAY 001 & OO2 are part of the browser - just ignore them. The two information files are accessed from the function [f] keys. The graphics, fonts and shades are an integral part of the disc, so anyone without LocoScript 4 or MicroDesign will miss out there.*

Disc Stumped

LET ME say straight away that, by and large, CP/M and Basic are mysteries to me. I can manage to use Diskit and PIP but, anything else, NO!

As this letter is produced by a PCW 8512 and a Canon BJC210 printer, you can guess that I only use the word processor abilities of this useful machine. By the way, your disc says that I have NO PRINTER!

However, after I had spent two fruitless afternoons trying to make the files on your disc work, I began to philosophise about your worthy efforts to support the Amstrad range. You seem to fall into the same trap that every computer buff does; he automatically assumes that everyone knows how to make it work without being told.

I daresay however that there are more people using Amstrads as word processors than as computers. So, if you really want to promote their continued use by the public at large, should you not consider those who, applauding your efforts, buy both your magazine and your cover discs?

Armed with both manuals for the original machine, I tried in vain to use all the files provided, in the absence of any instructions. I managed to download all the ANIMAL pictures, and I managed to run Invaders, but the only way to stop it was to switch the machine off! Every time you try EXIT it starts again! I managed Tictacto - and beat it to a draw but, for all the rest, whilst the machine was very friendly, replying to my request to RUN a file, it politely asked: "RUN?"

Seriously though, to increase your readership, and your appeal to the Joe and Joan Publics who use your beloved Amstrads, should, you not risk the accusation of teaching your Granny to suck eggs, and tell us what we have to do to make your cover disc work? Otherwise you are only appealing to the 'boffins' who consider themselves a race apart from the 'typists' and you will simply be counting the chairs on the Titanic, with fewer and fewer people keeping their 'Joyce' alive.

My compliments to PD Blake on his disc browser. I had a short correspondence with him on his DCALC - he is a busy lad, but tolerant of people like me!
Eric Donlon, Chesterfield

***PCW Today:** Being the first PCW magazine to carry regular cover discs (8000 Plus carried one disastrous disc, years ago) meant that there was no real precedent for us to follow. We were working blind. Like the magazine, the disc will grow and improve - just give it time.*

Untangling the Net

Baffled by the latest computer craze? Robert Nisbet unravels the hype and brings you the facts

HELLO there, I'm Robert Nisbet, and I'm here to guide you around the Internet.

The PCW can access the Net, however very few people actually use their Amstrad for this purpose. Many use PCs at work or school as they are faster, cheaper and let you see the pretty pictures. The Internet should not be ignored because it is an invaluable new source of PCW information.

I will always try to tell you which sites are heavily graphics-reliant so you can avoid them if you are using a PCW but bear in mind that nearly all commercial pages will use graphics, and most personal sites will as well. However, I have found a few text only pages, and there is a huge reserve of PCW information available on the Internet. The Net is also known by many other names, but the phrases - Internet, World Wide Web, WWW, or Web are most common. They all really different ways of describing the same thing.

The Internet is a series of pages of information, linked together. There are millions of these pages, covering just about every subject you'd care to think of. You can search for relevant pages by using key words, or you can access them directly by using their "web address", if you know it.

Web addresses, also known as URLs, will usually begin with the prefix - http:// which tells the computer that the page is written in Hyper Text (the main programming language on the Internet). In these tutorials, I will miss out the http prefix, as many computers automatically recognise it, just assume it is there. There are several other, less common prefixes, but you can forget about them for now, and as a beginner, you are unlikely to ever want to use them.

The next part of the address - usually www. - helpfully indicates that this is a World Wide Web page. However, because the Internet is growing so fast and space is limited, there are also other words that can be inserted in here, such as www2. or members. - as in the PCW Today web site. So always carefully check what the address is before typing. Some computers (mainly PCs) have been known to crash if the address is mis-typed.

Next comes the name of the company or the person whose site you are accessing - Locomotive for example, or alternatively it will be the name of the company renting-out the web space. The next part of the address will have a suffix to denote what country the page originates in. For example, if it is a British company, then this may read .co.uk. (for example, Amstrad used to have the address http://www.amstrad.co.uk) or if it is a USA government organisation it will use .org. Other common prefixes include .com, .net and .tm.

This part of the address may be the end, but most will have a / (slash) , then a directory or file name. These directories and file names can continue for long enough to make it a very long address - be ready for some careful typing. Note that there are no capital letters in the address. These are redundant on the Internet and most browsers will treat both capitals and lower case letters in the same way.

If you don't know the web address, your best way of finding a site is to issue a search, using keywords. Search Engines are a well known (and well used) part of the Internet, but not many people really understand how they work. They are a gem for finding what you want as quickly as possible, but can be a nightmare if you make a mistake. The three that I would recommend are Yahoo! (www.yahoo.com), Altavista (www.altavista.digital.com) and MetaCrawler (www.metacrawler.com). Yahoo! and Altavista are both owned by the same company, and MetaCrawler just 'borrows' information from other search engines.

All Search Engines will take single words, phrases, and some will allow Boolean logic. To search for all pages containing the word "Amstrad", you would type Amstrad. For the phrase: Amstrad PCW, type amazingly enough: '"Amstrad PCW"'. Single words do not need quotation marks, but phrases do require them.

Boolean logic adds an extra dimension to searching. Invented by a Mr. Boole, it uses simple keywords. For example, to submit a search on Ancient Rome, you would type: Ancient AND Rome. This means that both these words have to appear together in a web page for it to appear. Words you can use in Boolean logic are: AND, OR, LIKE, NEAR. You can also use strings of Boolean logic, such as 'amstrad AND pcw OR cpc'. This would bring up sites about Amstrad PCWs and CPCs.

The PCW Internet Yellow Pages

This issue we are visiting two PCW Sites. The world famous PCW Today Homepage, and the equally famous Ian McDonald Homepage for PCWs.

PCW Today Online...

http://members.tripod.com/~pcwtoday/

As this page is written for PCWs, it has a very bland, almost boring look to it. The one concession to images is for the web counter. The front hides, however, a wealth of information about the magazine, with a news page and loads of links. Whilst most of the site is of no real use to people who buy the mag, for those who are still thinking about purchasing a copy it is indispensable.

Design: *5/10* **Usefulness:** If you get PCW Today: *3/10* If you don't: *7/10*

Ian MacDonald's Homepage...

http://www.caliban.org/PCW

This PCW page is amazing. Whilst much of it wouldn't work on a PCW, due to the amount of images used, you can't fault it for content or information. Ian's whole homepage is very well designed, and has been carefully thought out to give the appearance of frames, but not using them, so computers such as the PCW can still (just about) view the site. The colour scheme is a departure from the norm, so I would advise you to take a look at this on a PC.

Design: *8/10* **Usefulness:** *8/10*

All shapes and sizes!

Selecting the right envelope is as important as the letter itself - Rod Shinkfield has more

A FLICK through a stationery catalogue will reveal envelopes of all shapes and sizes.

It would be impossible for any single addressing file to cover every variation, and impractical to create such numerous files separately.

The C4 envelope is used to post A4 sized material unfolded. Writers favour the C4 for presenting a manuscript to a publisher in pristine condition. It is recommended that a manuscript of more than ten pages should be sent unfolded in a C4 envelope. While a manuscript of ten or less pages is acceptable if folded once.

Folding an A4 sheet means using the next size envelope down, which is 229mm x 162mm (9ins x 6 3/8ins), and known as a C5. Unlike the C4, which goes short side first, the C5 goes long side first into my Epson Stylus 820 inkjet printer. To create a C5 addressing file, put a copy of ENVELOPE.C4 onto drive M: and open it.

The twenty-two return markers and long left margin won't be needed. Delete the layout code and create a New Layout with a shortened left margin to position 30.

The new layout will alter the positioning of the 22 return markers which now need reducing to seven (including the return marker next to the layout marker on the styling line. Save and name the file as ENVELOPE.C5. Remember you are working in drive M:, so put a copy for safety onto a disc.

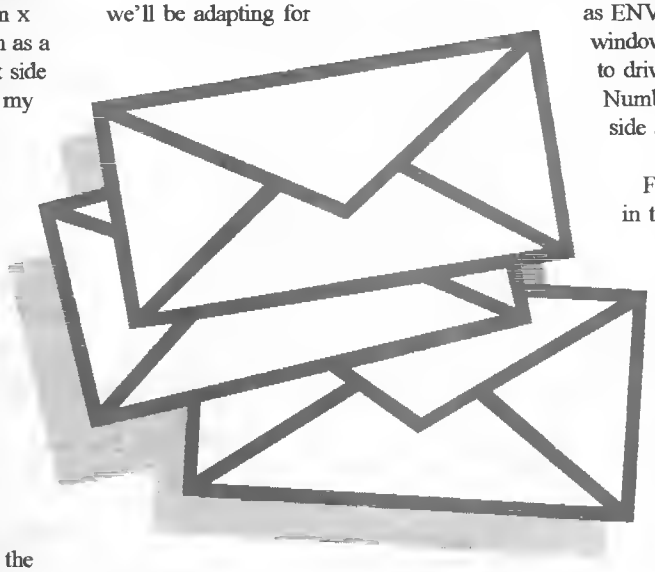
Set up your printer to take envelopes and, after typing in a name and address, use Save and print to print the address on the C5 envelope. If satisfied with the position of the printed address, put a copy of ENVELOPE.C5 to join ENVELOPE.C4 in group 7 on all four letter discs.

Incidently, a copy of each envelope addressing file is also put in group 7 of my LocoScript boot disc. Putting so many copies about may seem overdoing things a bit. But, when copies where only kept on my boot disc, I kept forgetting to copy an envelope addressing file over to drive M: when writing a letter - which was annoying.

Now, with copies (each one of 2k) always in the group nearest to drive M: on my four letter discs, it's easy to fetch one across without all the bother of changing back to the boot disc for a copy.

So that's C4 and C5 taken care of. Now, what about a Banker/wallet envelope with a long flap? This size of envelope 110mm x 220mm (4 1/4ins x 8 5/8ins), takes an A4 sheet of paper folded twice into thirds, and is best kept for letters.

Put a copy of ENVELOPE.C5, which we'll be adapting for



addressing banker envelopes, on drive M: and open for editing.

Type a name and address at the foot of the seven return markers. Reduce the number of return markers to three and, after placing a banker envelope on the sheet feeder, print out the address.

Again, when satisfied the positioning is right, rename the file as ENVELOPE.C4L (the 'L' standing for long flap) and put a copy along with all the others. Shorten or lengthen the left margin to move the address left or right, and delete or add returns to lift or lower the address.

The final addressing file I want to cover is for the envelope with a window through which the recipients's address, printed near the top left-hand side of the letter, can, when folded in thirds, be read through the window.

I 've chosen a banker/wallet long flap 110mm x 220mm (4 1/4ins x 8 5/8ins), with a window size of 35mm x 90mm (1 3/8ins x 3 1/2ins) positioned low at 20mm from left and 18mm up (I did warn you envelopes came in all shapes and sizes - so stick to a select few).

To position the address in the window: A document containing your letter's usual layout is opened on a letter disc by pressing [C] for create a new document, and named as ENVELOPE.C4W (the 'W' stands for window). Close and move the document to drive M: and open it again for editing. Number each line down the left-hand side and print it out.

Fold in three and place folded sheet in the envelope and view the window. Note down the smallest number on view in the window. Delete this number and replace it with a cross.

Delete the other numbers so the screen looks like figure four, and resave what is now an addressing file for window envelopes. Initially numbering lines will show through a window where to position future addresses no matter what the window's size and position.

The cross is where the first letter of the address begins. Place the cursor on 'X' and delete it, now type in the name line.

Before going onto the rest of the next line, sort out any disturbed tabs. It can take a bit of trial and error before addressing letters rather than envelopes become second nature, so persist either until you get it right each time or don't use window envelopes.

I hope to explain in the next Locoscript tutorial what to do when one of your LocoScript letter discs become full.

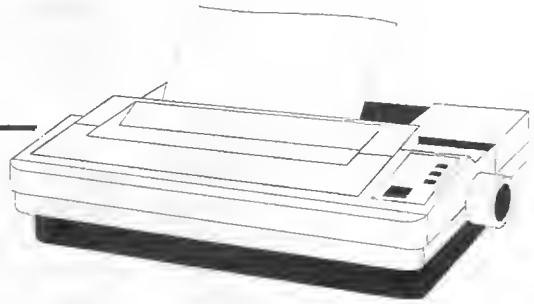
OFFICE LAND

Office supplies for your Amstrad PCW

Office Land,
10 Sterle Close,
Poole, Dorset
BH15 2AT

TEL: 01202 666155
FAX: 01202 677958

PCW PRINTER SUPPLIES



DAISYWHEELS FOR PCW 9512 *(£15.95)*

COURIER 10	PRETIGE ELITE 12
MINI GOTHIC 15	THESIS PS
LETTER GOTHIC 10/12	RECTA 10
ORATOR 10	SCRIPT 12

	BRANDED RIBBONS		COMPATIBLE RIBBONS	
PCW8256/8512	A060141FN	*£6.60*	2741FN	*£3.95*
	A06441MS	*£6.46*	2741MS	*£3.75*
PcW9256/10	A06041FN	*£6.60*	2741FN	*£3.95*
	A06441MS	*£6.60*	2741MS	*£3.75*
PCW9512	A50034MS	*£4.72*	2746MS	*£3.75*
			2746FN	*£3.95*
DMP2000/3000			2482RN	*£3.95*
DMP4000	A50015FN	*£6.90*	2426FN	*£3.95*
LQ3500	A06041FN	*£6.60*	2741FN	*£3.95*
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Please quote code when ordering

OTHER PCW PRODUCTS

LocoScript Start of Day Discs *(£12.95)*

PCW8256/8512	PCW9512
PcW9256	PCW9512+
PCW9512 CP/M	

3" Blank Discs *£3.95* each/*£35.00* for 10. Head Cleaning Kit 3"/3.5"/5.25" *£5.95.*
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Market Forces

What does the future hold? Steve Denson thinks the PCW industry needs a kick up the backside...

NOTHING livens up a market more than a brand new, exciting product. But blockbuster programs such as Route Planner or Locoscript 4, which drive the PCW forward and demonstrate how useful the old Amstrad can be, don't come along very often. Which is understandable since they took years to develop.

There surely cannot be many more 'super' products left in the PCW pipeline as all the major players seem to believe that they have taken their products as far as they possibly can go.

In any case, what sort of market remains for them to aim at? The general consensus is that there are still 100,000 PCWs in use out there somewhere. This sounds like a credible number, then, but the fact is that probably only 10,000 of these are 'active'. In other words their owners may be ready and willing to purchase new programs. The vast majority of the surviving machines are sitting in cupboards or, at best, in corners waiting to print the occasional letter.

My estimation is that only a 'major' release can hope to exceed total sales of 1000 units thesedays whereas a 'minor' program would do well to top 100. This does not mean, however, that it is not worth anybody's while developing and marketing a new product. In the case of a 'big' PCW publisher such as LocoScript Software, they have the marketing muscle to make a success of a new release and their name alone is a trusted sign of quality for their faithful followers. For the minor producers, selling 100 copies of a new program would bring a reasonable reward for their part-time efforts with no commercial overheads to cover.

The days are long gone when any company or individual could earn a living by selling a single PCW product, however good it may be. A firm might still offer a 'flagship' product but it now has to be be supported by a pretty substantial fleet! Even LocoScript have adjusted to the market by producing a catalogue selling a multitude of products from ribbons to hard disks. Yet this sensible approach of becoming the 'one-stop' general store as opposed to a specialist shop has its own problems. For example, you have to make sure that you are well stocked with popular items at all times as customers won't wait weeks for goods to arrive. This is all very well in theory but I have found that some formerly efficient PCW suppliers seem to go to sleep for weeks on end or even disappear altogether without warning, leaving you with orders you can't fulfil. Stocking also ties up a lot of capital which can lead to cash-flow problems for a small business.

To succeed, a new product has to be well-designed, well-priced and well-publicised. Not too expensive but not too cheap since the latter would push a program into the shareware category.

All the major players seem to believe that they have taken their products as far as they possibly can go.

It is a very fine balance to strike but a feasible one, although there is surely little mileage left in an (all-new) word processor, spreadsheet or database. Although, perhaps an integrated suite which combines all three in the manner of a PC works package, could be a front runner. But it would have to be mighty good and such an ambitious project would almost certainly demand expanded memory which would wipe out a large portion of an already limited market - unexpanded PCW 8256s and PcW 9256s would need upgrading.

A few good new games for the PCW would ot go amiss, either, although graphics-based software can take a lot of development time. How about a horse-racing simulation?

Another idea for spicing up the PCW software scene is to re-release some of the old-but-gold programs now lying dormant. Some people are already looking towards doing just that but such an objective is not always easy to achieve. The publishers or authors have to be traced in order to obtain an agreement and if a company or individual has moved - just once - this can be very difficult.

Even if you do trace the company, it is not necessarily plain sailing. A couple of years ago I approached, what used to be, a leading PCW publisher with a view to the re-marketing of a very popular integrated suite. They wanted a lot of money up-front, as well as guaranteed royalties, plus control over the re-printing of the manual. When I did the sums based on projected sales, the figures did not add up.

Other companies I contacted had even destroyed all their master discs so there was no possibility of a re-launch. The bigger the company, the more dismissive it appears to be of doing something positive with old product, even if it just involves placing a redundant program into the public domain.

Speaking of minority markets brings me back to the subject of the PcW 16. Cliff Lawson put forward a very well-reasoned explanation in the Winter issue for the fact that no future software was being developed for the new Amstrad purely due to economics. This response does beg the obvious question however - why did Amstrad bother to launch a new machine knowing that it had to rely soley on the built-in software?

The '16 was cut-off from its traditional user and software base and no computer can succeed in those circumstances. Lack of software killed so many new formats in the 80s.

The PC reigns supreme today, not because it had the best hardware or operating system - the Mac is acknowledged as a more elegant design. No, there is simply more software for the PC than any other computer and what is more, new developments have always maintained continuity with the past. Even on a Windows 95 PC, you can hit the start button, exit into DOS and run programs from a decade ago. If only one could do the equivalent on a 16 and step out of the desktop into CP/M...

Sorry, there I go again.

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Building an extension

Ever wondered what those three letters at the end of a file name were? Kathleen Thorpe has the answer

NO MATTER what you use your PCW for, whether it's word processing, programming, desktop publishing, or whatever, the finished result will probably be saved as a file or a series of files on your discs.

Every file has to have a name, you can have up to eight characters, followed by a full stop and then a file type extension of up to three characters (even PcW 16 file names, which can be as long as you want, have a hidden extension).

The name can be anything you like, as long as *you* can understand it. Letters and numbers are acceptable, as are the minus and underline characters found at the top of your keyboard.

It's best to steer clear of any other characters, especially the question mark and asterisk symbols, as these are reserved as 'wildcards' - these are characters which replace other characters for mass file operations.

A question mark represents one character, while an asterisk represents a group of characters, for example, *.COM will call up all the .COM files on a disc, LETTER?.DOC calls up all the files called LETTER1.DOC, LETTER2.DOC and so on. Wildcards are also useful if you can't remember the full name of a file.

File type extensions (the bit after the full stop) are a different matter altogether. Certain file types are best reserved for special kinds of files. For example, if you were to look at the files on your LocoScript start of day disc you would see some files called: SCRCHAR.JOY, KEYBOARD.JOY, SCRIPT.JOY and DISCMAN.JOY. These are peculiar to LocoScript, the .JOY being short for 'Joyce' which was the code name for the PCW while it was being developed.

Here is a list of some of the file extensions you might come across when you examine the directory of a disc by using the command DIR [FULL] in CP/M or by looking in LocoScript's disc management screen, with a brief description of what they are used for.

ASM

Short for ASSEMBLER, these are the source code files from which .COM files are created using Assembly language. These files consist mainly of mnemonic codes which are then converted into binary after which they can be executed as .COM files.

BAK

Short for BACKUP, these files are CP/M's equivalent to a LocoScript limbo file. Programs such as Protext automatically create a .BAK file when you have edited and re-saved an existing file, keeping the same name. Unlike LocoScript however, these .BAK files are in the same group on the disc as the new one.

BAS

This extension is used by Mallard Basic (and other dialects of Basic) for a file containing Basic source codes. Try loading Basic, type in a couple of commands, then type SAVE "DEMO". If you do a directory, you will find that you have created a file called DEMO.BAS.

If however you would like to give the listing a different extension, you can do so as long as you type the full name when reloading it. For example: SAVE "DEMO.XYZ" must be loaded back by typing LOAD "DEMO.XYZ" (the second speech marks are optional). If you neglect to type in the extension, Basic will look for a file called 'DEMO.BAS' and will get very confused when it can't find it.

COM

These are files which can be executed directly from the CP/M A> prompt, to run programs written in an Assembler or Compiler language. It isn't necessary to type the extension, CP/M assumes that a file name typed in at the A> without an extension is a .COM file. If you type PIP, it will load PIP and no questions asked. If you were to type the name of a file that isn't a .COM file, CP/M will repeat the file name followed by a '?'.

EMS/EMT

These are special 'BOOT UP' files, usually starting with a 'J'. EMS is the file extension for the 8000 series machines and the 9512. EMT is for the rest (except the PcW 16). It has been suggested that EMS stands for 'Early Morning Sun' and EMT 'Early Morning Tea' respectively (or is that early morning start and early morning tart? (Whoops, sorry!)

HEX

Files with this extension contain machine code which needs to be run through a special program called 'The Linker', which will turn it into a fully fledged .COM file. HEX is a complex language based on mathematics.

LIB

Short for LIBRARY, the idea of library files is that they contain commonly used routines, like sorting or statistical functions which are either supplied by the software manufacturer or included by the user, which can be brought into the compilation process if they are asked for.

OVL

Short for OVERLAY file and used when there is a premium on memory space. It doesn't make sense to have the whole of a program in your computer's memory, so a less frequently used part of it will be kept in an overlay file until it is needed, then it is called up into memory.

SUB

The commonest .SUB file is the 'PROFILE.SUB' which is a list of commands that CP/M will execute in order, just as if you had typed them in yourself.

$$$

The three dollar symbols are the conventional extension that is used for a temporary file - these will only last for as long as you leave the PCW on.

Perhaps the most common file extensions you will use when saving documents to disc are .DOC, .LET or .TXT.

But then again everyone develops their own unique filing system.

Next time I'll be babble-bashing with a run down of common computer-speak.

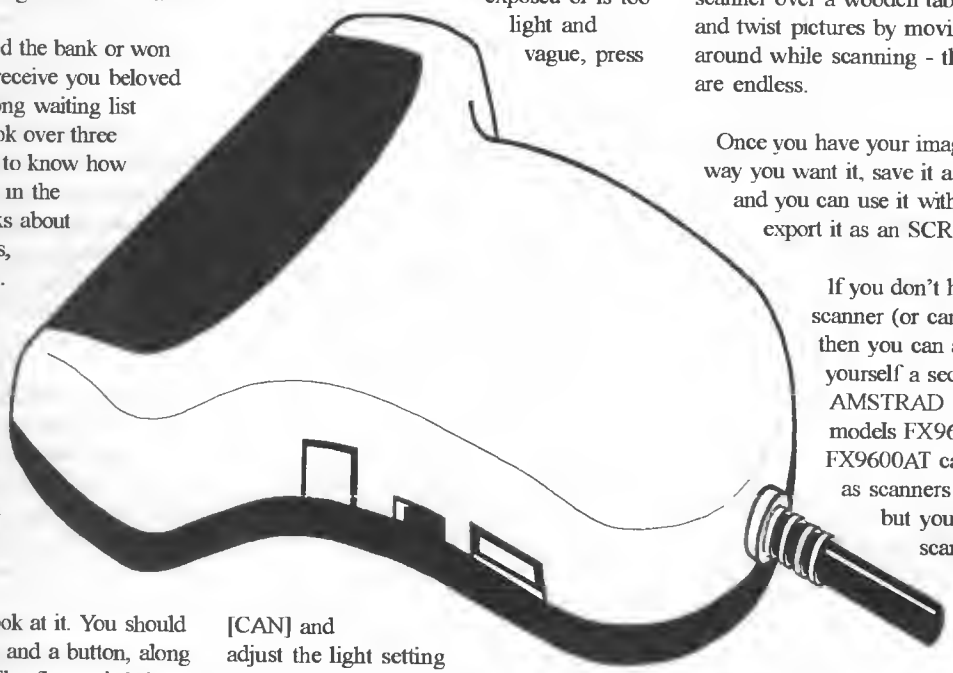
Well, I'll be Scanned!

If you want to create your own clip art or store photos on disc, you should invest in a hand scanner says P.D. Blake

I KNOW that they are expensive and if you haven't got one then I can't really blame you, but one piece of kit no Microdesigner should be without is the Hand Scanner.

This little gem of a tool can be obtained from Creative Technology for a £125 (or less if you go second hand). If you have a PCW 9256 (like me) you will also have to fork out for a dongle (a what?), a very short cable to allow you to plug the scanner in.

Once you have robbed the bank or won the lottery and finally receive you beloved scanner (there was a long waiting list when I got mine - it took over three months), you will need to know how to use it. The reference in the back of the manual talks about dithers and dot patterns, light settings and so on. All this may be a little confusing and drawn out when all you want is a copy of the tiniest pen and ink drawing of your cat, so here, in simple terms, are a few tips on getting the best results from your scanner.



Firstly, take a good look at it. You should see two switches, a dial and a button, along with a scanning head. The first switch is the density switch and has four settings, 100, 200, 300 and 400 dots per inch. The second is the dither patter and its settings are TEXT, LARGE DOTS, SMALL DOTS and PHOTO. The dial controls the light setting and the button actually activates the scanner. All these settings are used while you are scanning.

To start scanning, from LAYOUT in MD3, press [S] and then use the density switch to choose the quality and size of the scan, 100 will produce a small image while 400 will just about fill the page but will be much more detailed. Once you have decided on the density, press [ENTER].

You will now see that the scanning head has lit up. It is important that you keep this part of the scanner clean and dust free, or you will get black lines appearing over your image.

To begin scanning, position the scanner over the image and hold down the start button. Now move the scanner over the image slowly. An exact copy should appear on the screen in 1:1 graphics mode. If you find that the picture is dark and under-exposed or is too light and vague, press [CAN] and adjust the light setting dial, then try again.

Once you are happy with what you see, simply press any key other than [CAN] and you will be returned to LAYOUT where you can then edit your image.

While scanning you may find it useful to use the dither settings. TEXT is simply for pen and ink drawings and, obviously, text. The two DOT patterns give a varied effect depending on the type of image being scanned, but usually look like the kind of picture you would see in a newspaper. PHOTO is useful for scanning black and white photographs, though colour ones tend to give the best results using one of the DOT patterns. PHOTO will appear on the screen as grey scale tones and may not look much like anything, until you print out the picture, even then you may find that you need to do it all over again. In the PHOTO setting having the light dial in just the right place is very important to achieve good results.

You'll be amazed by the kind of effects you can create with a scanner. For instance you can make your paper appear to be grained or marbled, just by running your scanner over a wooden table. You can warp and twist pictures by moving the scanner around while scanning - the possibilities are endless.

Once you have your image scanned the way you want it, save it as an MDA file and you can use it with LocoScript 4 or export it as an SCR or CUT file.

If you don't have a hand held scanner (or can't afford £125) then you can always find yourself a second hand AMSTRAD fax machine. The models FX9600T and FX9600AT can both be used as scanners for the PCW, but you will still need a scanner interface, see Creative Technology for details.

Alternatively LocoScript offer a scanning service cost from £5 per image and I (plug, plug, plug) also offer a scanning service from around £2.50 per image.

Failing all that, you could always see if your local PCW club offers a similar service, or whether a member might be able to scan images for you (it's worth a try).

Finally, remember to keep the scanning head clean. If possible, keep your scanner out of harm's way, somewhere thatwhere it is unlikely to get bashed or dusty. So far I have been unable to find a scanner holder but I find that the cheap mobile phone holders, such as the ones you stick to a car dahboard, are quite sufficient. That's all for now, happy scanning!

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...and more - *the only limit is your imagination!*

Desktop Publishing means combining your word-processor text with pictures and diagrams to create spectacular pages like these - this advertisement was created and printed using *MicroDesign3* and a Bubblejet printer. *MicroDesign3* lets you lay out your text in columns, combine it with graphics, and even draw your own pictures and diagrams straight onto your PCW's screen.

MD3 is a powerful program, but it is also simple to learn: PCW Plus Magazine gave *MD3* five marks out of five for *"ease of use"* in their review. The *MD3* package comes complete with a comprehensive Beginner's Tutorial, and we also provide a Technical Support hotline free of charge between 4pm and 7pm every weekday.

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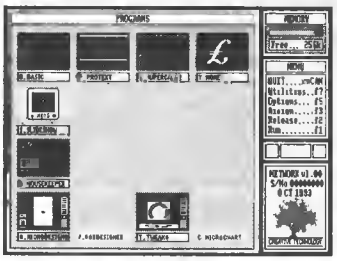
- ❑ *Links MD3 and Tweak3 together automatically.*

Please Note:
The Network is compatible with most CP/M programs and versions, but you are welcome to contact us with queries about compatibility.



MD3 Scanner

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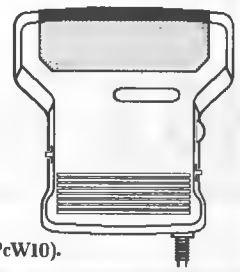
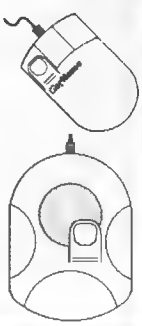
- ❑ *Scanning resolutions of 200, 300 and 400 dots per inch;*
- ❑ *Uses "dither-patterns" to simulate colours & grey-shades;*
- ❑ *Superb results from line-art or photographs;*
- ❑ *Compatible with all PCWs* (note: extension cable required for 9256 & PcW10).



KeyMouse

"INDISPUTABLY TOP OF THE TREE." *(PCW Plus)*

- ❑ *KeyMouse is a high-quality 3-button mouse which connects to the PCW via the keyboard socket. It is now available with a new Track-Ball option.*
- ❑ *KeyMouse comes complete with its own smart mouse mat, and comprehensive user manual.*
- ❑ *In MicroDesign, the KeyMouse system can be locked to move only vertically or horizontally, making it much easier to draw straight lines.*
- ❑ *KeyMouse has special modes for LocoScript, Protext and CP/M. It is especially useful for CP/M programs which use the cursor (arrow) keys.*



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CREATIVE TECHNOLOGY

Survive the crash

The PcW 16 is prone to the occassional crash but don't panic - if you follow Rod Shinkfield's guide you should not lose your work

IF YOU have come to the PcW 16 after using older Amstrad PCW family members, you are likely to be familiar with the importance of backing up your work on to floppy discs.

The nature of these old faithful machine's rather volatile memory drive, meant "backup" or risk losing valuable data should the disc become corrupted.

Despite owners of PcW 16 enjoying 1Mb of Flash-ROM and able to use both High Density (1.44Mb) and Double Density (720Kb) , though HD is recommended, it is still prudent to backup important files on to discs, even though files can also be saved in PcW 16's Cabinet.

The Cabinet is not a bottomless pit and can soon become full. Which is when using Archiving can be used to move older files to a disc and so make space in the Cabinet. Archiving is automatically done and you can't pick the files to move. You will need to use the Move files facility if you wish to select which files to move.

You can, of course, backup individual files as you work, something familiar to most users of the older machines; or you can periodically make use of the "Backup Cabinet to Disc" facility instead. For example, format three discs and label them: PcW 16, BACKUP, and number each disc (for instance: 1:0, 2:0, 3:0). Keep these discs separate from your other discs and keep them close to hand. And, as using "Backup Cabinet to Disc" overwrites any files already on the disc, don't use these three backup discs for any other work.

Also, remember, when using "Backup Disc to Cabinet" any files added to the Cabinet after the "Backup Cabinet to Disc" was last used will overwrite such extra files in the Cabinet - so be aware.

If working on the PcW 16 for a long time, creating and editing many PcW 16 files over a whole day, say, take the backup disc 1:0 and "Backup Cabinet to Disc" before taking your first morning break (probably before stopping for morning coffee); backup using disc 2:0 before stopping for lunch, and use backup disc 3:0 if breaking off in the afternoon.

Once the process of "Backup Cabinet to Disc" begins you can clear off to put the kettle on, leaving the PcW 16 to complete the task of copying all the files stored in the Cabinet safely on to the disc.

You don't even need to rush back, the PcW 16 will display the screen-saver after ten minutes (I've altered the time on my PcW 16 to five minutes, which is long enough) and wait patiently for you to return and press any key to resume work. When evening finally comes, and you decide you've done enough for the day and wish to put your feet up after a hard day at the keyboard, backup using the disc 1:0 again. After using each backup disc it is put to the back, and the disc to be used for the next backup session is taken from the front, so all three backup discs are used in rotation.

Should the worst happen and you need to use PcW 16's RESCUE DISC to restore the PcW 16 and start again, the BACKUP DISCS 1:0, 2:0, and 3:0, will restore your files to varying degrees. The backup disc at the back will naturally be the last one used to "Backup Cabinet to Disc" the previous day and will therefore be the one whose files are most up to date.

If you are only having a short spell on the PcW 16, writing only one or two files, you may find it easier to use "Backup Cabinet to Disc" once at the beginning of the session and then save and copy the individual files to a disc as you work.

I also recommend using "Backup Cabinet to Disc", putting the disc safely to one side, before experimenting with your PcW 16's software (experimenting is often the best way to understand the PcW 16 programs linked as they are to DOS).

Queen Anne's Gate

The PcW 16 column with byte

OVER the past few months the '16 has taken more than it's fair share of stick from columnists in this and other magazines. Now, at last, the bad-boy PCW has got its own column.

You may have wondered why we've called it Queen Anne's Gate - well Amstrad have this quaint custom of giving their computers a nickname - the classic PCW was called Joyce - and the '16 is called Anne. Apparently it got the name because it is a complete home office and the Home Office is based at Queen Anne's Gate! Oh what razor-sharp wit!

All the gossip this issue revolves around that top chap, Mr Elliott, who's been busy writing CP/M for Annie. Everyone's raving about it, and no doubt they will be for the rest of the year at least. But is it actually such brilliant news?

Grafting CP/M onto the Rosanne system is a bit like adding a reel-to-reel tape machine to your state-of-the-art CD hi fi system. Annie's advanced operating system is hardly comparable to the antiquated CP/M.

Still, if CP/M means new external software for the machine, any '16 user would be wrong to turn their nose up at it.

If CP/M can kick-start Annie's fortunes then maybe programmers will be encouraged to write some more exciting software.

Unfortunately, the best PCW programs like LocoScript 4 and MicroDesign 3 will never work with John Elliott's CP/M, so we still need a decent graphics package like the one Rob Buckley was working on until his hard drive crashed!

Shopping around

Continuing his quest to expand the horizons of the PcW 16, Adrian Braddy tries out the Shopping List program

YOUR PcW 16 - bargain that it is - came bundled with some excellent external software. Last issue we had a look at the Word Match anagram solver, so this time it's the turn of Shopping List to come under scrutiny.

Don't be put off by the uninspiring name, this is actually a very useful bit of programming and although basic it illustrates very well just what the '16 can do.

The program is lurking on your Rescue Disc, so it may be wise to make a copy if you plan to regularly use this program. Put the disc in the drive and press [Task] [f7] to enter the Run External Program menu.

Select Shopping List, hit [ENTER] and we're away.

Shopping List has the look and feel of all '16 programs and is therefore very easy to use. There is comprehensive online help available to guide you through but you shouldn't really need it. The program and it's help file can be copied to the cabinet for speedy use, but to be honest it's fast enough from disc and it will only take up precious space.

The program is a stripped-to-basics database and is, surprisingly enough, intended to produce grocery shopping lists. On loading, the first thing you will see is the example shopping list which contains hundreds of items and includes everything you could ever possibly want to buy at a super market . If you do want to use this program for its intended purpose, you will obviously want to edit the standard list, if not come up with your own completely original one. Either way is remarkably easy.

The program can be used, not just for shopping lists, but also in other areas where a simple record of stocks kept against stocks needed is required.

So, if you run a small business, this program will adequately catalogue simple stock taking for you. All items are listed alphabetically on screen and on the print out. You can choose to show only those items needed or, if you prefer, all the data.

Before you start, have a play with the sample list. To edit an item, just move the cursor over it and hit the yellow key.

There are three fields that can be edited. There is the item "Name" - this can be up to 24 characters long and can include spaces. Next there is the "Required" field, this shows the number of the named items that you require. Lastly is the "Actual" field and this shows how many of the named item you actually have.

When the "Actual" field is less than the "Required" field it will be printed together with all the other needed items, should you so desire it.

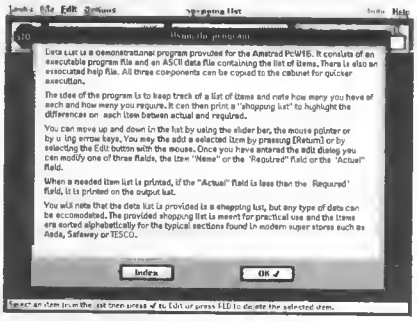
For keyboard control, you can move swiftly through menus like the Edit Data Item menu by pressing [Tab] and [Shift] [Tab]. The green key or [ENTER] will

confirm your changes and they will be added to the list - although at this point that is not a permanent change.

To add new items to a list is just as simple - the blue key will take you to a similar menu to the one described above and you enter the information in much the same way.

If you wish to start a new list from scratch, just press [Ctrl] [A] and all items will be deleted. It is also possible to select items to delete by highlighting them and pressing [Ctrl] [C].

All data created is in simple ASCII code, so it can be exported to and imported from a PC. To import a new list is very easy. It should be a simple text file in CSV format (Comma Separated Value). An imported



file should have each list entry on a new line. The first item should be the name and be in quotation marks although this is not essential unless the text includes commas. The next two figures are the required and actual values for the entry but they are not needed. Press [Ctrl] and [I] with the DOS disc in the drive.

To export, just press [Ctrl] [E] and put a DOS format disc in the drive. The file will be saved in CSV format and its name should be no longer than eight letters - the default is "Datalist"

You can also load and save lists to disc or cabinet, so you can have as many different files as you like.

This is a very neat and versatile little package that should not be dismissed. Even if all you want is a program to give you an alphabetical list, Shopping List will oblige in a very short time. It is also compatible with the spreadsheet so you can switch between the two.

If you haven't had a look at the programs on your Rescue Disc, do it now - there's a large part of your '16 that you are leaving dormant.

Basic instinct

Programmnmer PD Blake lets you into a couple of Basic trade secrets...

THE following listing shows how a COM file may be run from within BASIC. It may be used as a subroutine and added to your own programs, you could even make your own CP/M front end with it.

```
10 FOR a = 1 TO 1000:NEXT
20 FOR a = 128 TO 127 + LEN(fl$):POKE
a,ASC(MID$(fl$,a-127,1))
30 NEXT:POKE a,0
40 MEMORY 49999!:FOR a = 0 TO 6:
READ d
50 POKE a + 50000!,d:NEXT
60 v= 50000!: CALL v
70 DATA 14,47,30,255,195,5,0
80 STOP
```

In line 20 the variable fl$ must be defined by an earlier INPUT command thus:

```
5 ON ERROR GOTO 100:INPUT "Type
file to run (or STOP to abandon): ";fl$
```

To make BASIC automatically search for a COM file, thus dispensing with the need to input the whole file name, add this line:

```
6 fl$=fl$+".COM"
```

And to make certain that the program is actually on the disc add:

```
7 IF FIND$(fl$)="" THEN PRINT
"CANNOT FIND FILE!!!":GOTO 5
```

The ON ERROR GOTO defined in line 5 is simply a safe guard against typing errors etc, and should be written thus:

```
8 PRINT "INVALID FILE
NAME!!!!!":RESUME 5
```

Now for the one that you (and I) have been waiting for. Do you remember issue 6 and the question I asked Creative Technology? Well, just in case you've forgotten, CT's MicroDesign manual states that MD images saved as .SCR files can be used from BASIC, unfortunately the manual doesn't say how.

Also, rather more worrying, CT didn't know how to do it either. Well, perhaps I was asking the wrong people, for, as I have discovered, it can be done.

The following listing comes from a young man called Daniel French of the South Essex PCW Club (which I believe is now called the British Amstrad PCW Club), who has managed to find out what no one else could.

Daniel's listing is his own adaptation of a listing he found in issue 70 of *PCW Plus* and is for displaying STOP PRESS canvas (.SPC) files but will also accept .SCR files whisch can be produced by MicroDesign. Have fun..

```
10 REM *** SCR FILE DISPLAY DEMONSTRATION
20 REM *** WILL DISPLAY STOP PRESS CANVAS 'EXAMPLE.SPC'
30 REM *** DANIEL FRENCH 1998
35 PRINT CHR$(27)+"E"+CHR$(27)+"H"
36 PRINT "PROGRAM WILL DISPLAY SCREEN FILE. PRESS ANY KEY TO GET RID OF PICTURE"
40 f$="EXAMPLE.SPC"
50 GOSUB 60000
60 S$=INPUT$(1):PRINT CHR$(27)+"y":PRINT CHR$(27)+"E"+CHR$(27)+"H":END
59999 END
60000 REM *** THIS SUBROUTINE DISPLAYS SCR FILES ON THE SCREEN ***
60010 OPEN "O" ,1, "M:TEMPO.$$$":FOR SAV = -16384 TO -16034
60020 PRINT #1,PEEK(SAV)
60030 NEXT:CLOSE
60040 A=&HC000:canvas=&HC0FD
60050 POKE a,&HC3:a=a+1:POKE A,&HAB:a=a+1:POKE a,&HC0:A=&HC0AB
60060 RESTORE 60170
60070 READ X$:WHILE X$ <> "ZZ"
60080 POKE A,VAL("&H"+X$):A=A+1:READ X$
60090 WEND
60100 CALL canvas(F$)
60110 OPEN "I" ,1, "M:TEMPO.$$$"
60120 FOR SAV = -16384 TO -16034
60130 INPUT #1,TOPOKE
60140 POKE SAV,TOPOKE
60150 NEXT:CLOSE
60160 RETURN
60170 DATA 11,2b,c0,d5,18,2d,d1,06,08,1a,ee,ff,77,13,23,10,f8,3a,05,c0
60180 DATA 3c,fe,5a,20,0c,3a,03,c0,3c,fe,20,c8,32,03,c0,3e,00,32,05,c0
60190 DATA b7,21,ab,c0,ed,52,19,28,1e,18,d0,2a,03,c0,ed,5b,05,c0,29,29
60200 DATA 29,29,01,00,b6,09,4e,23,46,c5,e1,29,eb,29,29,29,19,18,b7,af
60210 DATA c9,c9,00,4e,06,00,23,5e,23,56,ed,53,03,c0,c5,e1,19,46,c5,e5
60220 DATA af,77,11,07,c0,ed,53,05,c0,11,03,c0,0e,98,cd,05,00,e1,c1
60230 DATA 70,21,00,00,22,03,c0,22,05,c0,11,07,c0,0e,0f,cd,05,00,3c,28
60240 DATA 1e,11,2b,c0,0e,1a,cd,05,00,11,07,c0,0e,14,cd,05,00,b7,20,0b
60250 DATA 01,00,c0,cd,5a,fc,e9,00,b7,28,ea,11,07,c0,0e,10,cd,05,00,c9
60260 DATA ZZ
```

This routine should prove useful to any one wanting to add graphics to their programs, but at 22k each you won't fit many .SCR files on a disc.

Also, in it's present form it only allows one file to be defined in line 40, if you wish to use it to browse through images then change line 40 to:

```
40 INPUT "Type file to display: ";f$
```

And add:

```
41 IF FIND$(f$)="" THEN PRINT
"CANNOT FIND FILE!!!!):GOTO 40
```

And change line 60 to:

```
60 S$=INPUT$(1):PRINT
CHR$(27)+"y":PRINT
CHR$(27)+"E"+CHR$(27)+"H":GOTO 10
```

You might also find it useful to add a DIR or FILES command in line 40 or add a line 39 so that you can see what is on your disc.

An ON ERROR GOTO might also be used to trap any typing errors when you input the file to display.

Both .SPC files produced by STOP PRESS and .SCR files produced by Microdesign and Graphics Express can be used to good effect.

The routine can be changed in any number of ways, if you have any good suggestions then let me know.

Next is another one many people may have been waiting for. Just how do you access a protected BASIC program (ie: one saved using the P toggle) ?

This is yet another task believed to be impossible. In fact the MALLARD BASIC manual supplied by LocoScript Software actually states that the act of saving with the P toggle is irreversable, but it isn't

For instance, RPED.BAS (on your CP/M+ master disc) is protected, you can't TYPE it, LIST it or LLIST it at all, unless you do this:

1) Ensure that you have BASIC.COM and RPED.BAS on the same disc (or BASIC.COM in drive M:).

2) Enter into Basic and type the following lines (pressing return at the end of each line):

```
NEW
SAVE"BLANK.BAS",A
LOAD"RPED
MERGE"BLANK
SAVE"BLANK.BAS",A
```

If you now LIST the file called BLANK.BAS you will find that it contains a copy of RPED.BAS,only now you can read it for yourself.

It is effectively an ASCII file and may be used as a normal BASIC program, inserted into Locoscript, prited out, whatever you want to do with it.

This process works with all BASIC prograns that have been saved thus:

```
SAVE"FILENAME.EXT",P
```

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Flipping Heck!

They said it couldn't be done but David Landers has done it - he's persuaded Flipper to work with Cirtech drives...

ACCORDING to Cirtech's literature, and everything else you've read up to now, the one disadvantage of the Scottish firm's self-booting drives (GEM and Insyder hard-discs, and the Flash Drive) is that they aren't compatible with 'Flipper' - the clever multi-tasking program that splits your PCW into separate compartments and lets you 'flip' between LocoScript and CP/M without re-booting.

Well, I have to tell you that it ain't necessarily so... you really can have your cake and eat it!

Fabulous FID files

The secret lies in the 'FID' files that Cirtech supply with their drives. FID files can be thought of as device drivers which over-rule the computer's basic input/output system. With the correct FID file installed, both CP/M and LocoScript can 'see' the fixed-drive - even if it wasn't used to boot the PCW.

At least three different FID files have been supplied with Cirtech drives: early GEMs used GEMF.FID; Insyders and later GEMs use HDRIVER.FID, while Flash Drives have an FDRIVER.FID. You'll find one or other of these files on the support disc that came with the drive.

If the appropriate FID file is copied to group 0 of an ordinary start-up floppy, the PCW can be booted from that floppy, yet the system will still recognise the fixed-drive. The start-up disc must contain a suitable (recent) version of LocoScript or CP/M, and you'll need to hold down the keyboard's space-bar to stop the self-booting Cirtech drive doing its stuff.

Can you Flip?

The interesting bit is that this trick can be performed after loading Flipper 3. If your PCW is fitted with a GEM/Insyder or Flash Drive, and you've also got a current version of Flipper, try it for yourself. Flipper owners will know that this special program is used to boot the PCW from scratch, and is then followed by standard start-of-day discs to 'launch' the desired LocoScript and CP/M environments.

So - with the fixed-drive switched on - power up the system while keeping the keyboard's space-bar pressed down. Using floppies, load Flipper, then launch a LocoScript and a CP/M environment in the usual way. Provided that your Loco and CP/M start-up discs both contain the FID file, you'll find that their environments can access the Cirtech drive, and you can flip between them to your heart's content.

No Guarantees

I have Flipper version 3.10 and everything works fine on my system. But Cirtech DO NOT endorse the use of Flipper with their drives - so please don't complain to them if things go wrong! Certain problems can arise - the most obvious being that conflicting operating system configurations may be read from the floppy start-up disc(s) and the fixed-drive.

For instance, LocoScript will take certain support files off the fixed-drive instead of the floppy, so (at the very least) you could get a message advising you to update the SETTINGS.STD file on the disc in A:. Choose to "Write it later" - but don't bother. (Avoid this by ensuring that the floppy set-up matches that on the Cirtech drive.)

Another potentially troublesome point is drive lettering. Under CP/M, Cirtech's self-booting drives are renamed - so the Flash Drive becomes drive A:, while four partitions on a GEM/Insyder are called A:, B:, E: and F:. This doesn't happen with a floppy/FID start-up, however, so the floppy drives remain as A: and B: (assuming that the latter is fitted). The Flash Drive is then C: - while hard-disc partitions become C:, D:, E: and F:.

This may upset some CP/M applications - though the vast majority are perfectly happy to run from drive C: rather than drive A:. Of course, if you have submit files or CP/M menu systems which refer to drive A: on the assumption that this is the fixed-drive, then it's all going to get rather awkward.

Changing Places

If you want to, you can actually force CP/M to swap drive letters on a Flash Drive system by running Cirtech's specially modified version of DiscKit. (There's no equivalent dodge for a GEM or Insyder, though.)

With the Flash Drive initially recognised as Drive C:, change to C: and type DISCKIT S [RETURN]. This doesn't run the full DiscKit program. but it does swap the drive letters - so from now on the Flash Drive will be A: and the first floppy drive will be C:. Do it automatically by adding these lines to the end of the PROFILE.SUB file on the floppy boot-disc:-

```
C:
DISCKIT S
A:
; LOGGED ON TO A:, FLASH
DRIVE
```

Bad Neighbours

The Flash Drive is a 'read-only' device, so neither CP/M nor LocoScript can change anything on it. But with Flipper running on a GEM/Insyder system, nasty things can happen if the different environments are allowed to write/copy/delete files on the same hard-disc partition. This isn't just the usual CP/M misunderstanding about the nature of LocoScript's 'limbo' files - it's much more fundamental. You can lose data if you're not careful.

When using Flipper, each environment is initially blind to changes that may have been made by another environment - each one assuming that the disc directories remain exactly as they were the last time that they were logged. This is always true of Flipper in fact, but the potential for

disaster is much greater with a hard-disc than with a floppy. Let's say that you've just finished a LocoScript session which resulted in new documents being saved on Drive E:. Now you flip over to CP/M and start designing some MicroDesign masterpieces. If those files were to be saved on E: also, they could over-write the LocoScript ones!

Hard discipline

The answer is to reserve disc partitions for the exclusive use of each environment. Never use a CP/M partition for LocoScript data or vice-versa - this is a sensible hard-disc habit anyway, but it's vital under Flipper.

If you need to move files from one to another, use a floppy disc as an intermediary. For example: if you are using LocoScript to write a SUB file, rather than create an ASCII version of the Loco document directly on a CP/M partition, save it on a floppy then flip to CP/M and use PIP to copy the ASCII file from the floppy to your CP/M partition.

And always follow the correct Flipper procedure concerning device resets. Not only must you reset the printer each time you flip, but you should also reset the drives whenever you enter a new environment. In LocoScript that simply means pressing [f7]. Pressing [STOP] (or [ALT]+[C]) at the CP/M prompt will reset the default drive - but it's better to log all hard-disc partitions. Do this with the following command:-

DIR Z.Z [drive=all,user=all]

- which forces CP/M to search all drives/partitions for an imaginary file called Z.Z. It won't be found, but the disc directories will be updated in the process. For convenience, put that line into a file named RESET.SUB and then you just need to type RESET and press [RETURN].

Not so fast

You'll appreciate, of course, that a Flipper floppy/FID start-up negates the 'start-of-day' speed advantage of a self-booting Cirtech drive. That doesn't bother me, personally, as I never switch my 9512 off.

With screen-savers installed for both LocoScript and CP/M, it stays on day and night. I just turn off the GEM when I've finished work (but that's something you can't do with an Insyder, unfortunately).

A fixed-drive undoubtedly makes any PCW a much better tool.

Add Flipper and some extra RAM, and you've got a real multi-tasking monster!

For Flash Drive fans

The FID-file trick can be useful even without Flipper. Many Flash Drive owners will have a host of LocoScript 3/4 printer files installed on their ROM drive - particularly if they've bought additional LX fonts.

These extra typefaces won't be wanted every session but, nevertheless, they'll all be copied into memory at each start-up - and that takes quite a time, even with super-fast ROM chips. So it's a good idea to prune the printer files.

As explained in the main section, if FDRIVER.FID is in group 0 of a LocoScript 3 or 4 start-of-day disc, the system can be started from that floppy (with the space-bar held down) yet the Flash Drive will still be accessible.

Begin by making a copy of your Loco start-of-day disc - the one that you used to set up the Flash Drive.

Delete everything on this new copy apart from the following:- the main 'J-something-LOCO.EMS/EMT' system file; all files ending in .JOY (these may be hidden); INSTALL.DRV (if you have an external printer), and your SETTINGS.STD file - which is presumed to be the same one that's on the Flash Drive. Also keep all printer files which end in '@xx' (where xx could be any two characters). Finally, copy over FDRIVER.FID from your Cirtech support disc.

Provided that LocoScript's settings file on the Flash Drive has the names of all your LX fonts, you'll be able to specify them in documents even if their '@xx' character-shape files are temporarily missing.

So now re-install the Flash Drive; putting back all the files it previously held, other than '@xx' files - which should be reduced to a minimum. Put back only those fonts/sizes that you'll need for everyday printing (and use the space you've gained on the Flash Drive for something else).

From now on, the surplus '@xx' files will live on the special floppy boot disc. Delete from that floppy those '@xx' files which you've decided to keep on the Flash Drive - making sure that, between the two, you still have the full set. (Note:- 8000-series owners, with a 180k drive, may need to use supplementary start-up floppies - if you're not familiar with this, you'll find details in your LocoScript User Guide.)

The Flash Drive - shorn of superfluous printer files - will now boot LocoScript noticeably faster for all regular Loco sessions. On those occasions when the extra fonts are needed, a 'mixed-media start-up' will be carried out. This means that, whenever fancy printing is likely, you switch on the PCW with the space-bar held down.

Then, using the special new disc(s), follow the normal procedure for a standard floppy start-up - you'll see the copyright screen confirm the presence of 'FlashDisk' (sic).

The basic system loads from the floppy disc(s), but support files are copied, silently, from ROM - apart from those extra fonts, of course. The drive light will start flashing again as LocoScript re-checks, finds more font files on the floppy, and copies them into memory also.

A mixed-media start-up won't be as fast as the Flash Drive usually is - but it's still a lot quicker than floppies can manage by themselves.

PIP, PIP, Hooray!

The majority of PCW users never venture away from the safety of CP/M. Kathleen Thorpe thinks these people are missing out

IF YOU only ever use LocoScript to copy or erase one file at a time from group to group or disc to disc. If you sometimes wish there was a quicker, easier way to do it, then this is the article for you.

Among the utilities on your CP/M disc, there is a program called PIP (Peripheral Interchange Program). This can copy groups of files by using 'Wildcards' (characters which represent others, a '?' represents one character, '*' represents a group of characters).

If you are using a one drive machine and want to copy a group of files from one disc to another, you need to copy your files into drive M: first.

So, load CP/M. At the A> prompt type PIP [RETURN]. After a short on-screen message about PIP, an asterisk [*] will appear. Remove your CP/M disc and put in your files disc. The syntax is:

TO DRIVE:=FROM DRIVE:FILENAME.EXT

If for example your files all have the extension .DOC, after PIP's * type:

M:=A:*.DOC [RETURN]

This tells PIP to copy to M: all the files on A: that have the extension .DOC. You will see all the files named on screen as they are copied. When PIP has copied all the .DOC files to M:, the * will reappear.

Remove your files disc and replace it with a blank formatted disc. Now type:

A:=M:*.DOC

As you can see, the names of the drives have been swapped over. Press [RETURN], again you will see the names of the files on screen as PIP copies them from drive M: to the blank disc in drive A:.

To repeat a command, rather than type the whole thing in again, simply press the [COPY] key and it will automatically be put back on the screen. Simply make any alterations necessary to the command.

This is the simplest of PIP's applications. There are additional commands, for example, maybe you want your files to go into a different group.

Using the same files that are already copied to Drive M:, to put them in Group 1 of the disc, you would type:

A:[g1]=M:*.DOC [RETURN]

If you only wanted some of the files copied from drive M: you would use the 'confirm' [c] option like this:

A:=M:*.DOC[c] [RETURN]

PIP will put the name of the first file on screen, for example:

copy FILENAME1.doc y/n?

Press [y] for yes and PIP will copy the file. Press [n] for no and PIP will ignore it and go on to the next (there is no need to press [ENTER], PIP will respond automatically). Other commands work in a similar way to the [c] command. If you want to see the contents of a text file you are copying, type:

M:=TEXT.DOC[e] [RETURN]

The [e] stands for echo. Of course if the file is a LocoScript text file, you will only see gobbledy gook. So only use this with ASCII text files.

To verify that the file has been copied correctly, use the command [v].

The command [l] puts the text file you have copied all in lower case letters, while [u] moves the text into upper case.

Pressing [k] kills the screen display. I don't use this because I like to see what PIP is doing.

To rename a file you are copying is an easy process. If you have a file called LETTER1.LET in Group 2, and you want to put a copy of it into group 4 on the same disc and call it LETTER1.BAK, the command is:

A:LETTER1.BAK[g4]=A:LETTER1.LET[g2] [RETURN]

Remember the order of PIP's commands:

To Drive:Newname.Ext[To Group]=From Drive:Oldname.Ext[From Group]

If the name is to stay the same, you only need to type it in the 'FROM' section.

It is also possible to merge files with PIP. You may have written an article in two parts called ARTICLE1.DOC and ARTICLE2.DOC. Then decide to turn them into one large file. By linking the two file names with a comma you can merge them together. So:

MARTICLE1.DOC=A:ARTICLE1.DOC,ARTICLE2.DOC [RETURN]

When you copy files using PIP, you are still left with the originals on disc. If you no longer want them, leave PIP by pressing [ENTER]. The A> will return, so you now type:

ERA A:FILENAME.EXT [c] [RETURN] (again, wildcards can be used)

This will erase all the files that fit the specified description. 'Confirm' also works with ERASE.

If this has whetted your appetite for CP/M, there will be more in later issues of *PCW Today*. Next time we'll be taking a look at directories.

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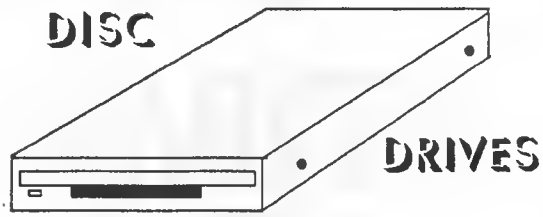

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It's good to talk

Multi-talented Kathleen Thorpe runs a helpline for PCW users when she's not writing for *PCW Today*

AFTER years of hammering away on a typewriter, I progressed to my son's Amstrad CPC 464 using 'Easy Amsword' on tape. More often than not I got ticked off for pinching his precious computer.

Being a complete Luddite as far as computers with disc drives were concerned, I approached my new PcW 10 with some trepidation. This machine was a different animal altogether.

To me at the time it was the equivalent of upgrading to a Pentium 233 MMX which worked faster, had more memory, cooked my breakfast and washed the dishes afterwards.

First it was just another writing tool but after discovering *PCW Plus*, a news-stand Amstrad magazine around at the time, I realised this piece of technology had more potential than I imagined.

In the beginning I had the attention-span of a fruit fly as far as CP/M was concerned but after many a night spent studying and experimenting into the wee small hours, its secrets along with those of LocoScript and MicroDesign were gradually revealed to me. Although I'm still no expert, I think I know enough to get by, and felt I might have something to offer other PCW users.

Initially I tried to contact other users in my area by 'phoning the local BBC radio station. On Sunday mornings, Radio Nottingham put out a show where callers can buy, sell, give away, or ask for any item they want (except live animals). I asked for anyone who owned an Amstrad PCW to contact me and gave my telephone number over the air.

Seconds after I'd hung up, the telephone began to ring and hardly stopped that day. Some misheard my plea and thought I was selling my PCW, or worse still, giving it away. Others thought I was offering help for Amstrad PCs. A few wanted to know where they could buy software and one lady needed advice on LocoScript.

A month or so later, I went on air again, this time to offer help to anyone who was in difficulties with LocoScript. Again the telephone hardly stopped but after a few days the calls began to dwindle.

The next idea was to put an advertisement in our local free ads paper offering help and advice. The ad is repeated in each issue of this twice weekly publication and has proved to be very fruitful. As it covers Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Leicestershire, I hoped to reach a wide variety of PCW owners and this is exactly what happened.

Probably some of the most interesting and unusual uses for LocoScript were from two different gentlemen who called for advice. One was a chicken farmer who designed and made chicken coops. He used LocoScript to produce catalogues of the different style hen houses he built, then with photographs added he would show them to prospective customers. The other was a man who compiled discographies of Country and Western singers for both the American and European markets. The ingenuity of some PCW owners never fails to amaze me.

Most of the calls I receive are from people who have brought a second user PCW as their very first venture into computing, sometimes without discs or manuals. The majority seem to expect the PCWs to be like a PC and to burst into song at switch on. They generally have no idea of how to use it or where to get software from, however these are quite easy problems to solve. I keep a long list of telephone numbers relating to software companies by the 'phone (*PCW Today* adverts are extremely helpful here) and simply pass on the relevant details to the caller.

Many people are amazed to discover just how much support their machine has and even more so when I tell them about the many different clubs they could join. I also keep a card index box to hand; this contains names, addresses and telephone numbers of companies who support the PCW in other ways with a brief description of the service they offer. It also includes details of several people I have been fortunate to meet through my helpline. These have their own areas of expertise and have kindly allowed me to add them to my contacts list.

So if someone calls with a problem I can't help with personally, more often than not I can put them in touch with someone who can.

PCW Today's Contacts page has given me another opportunity to help others. Our esteemed editor, being the 'very nice man that he is' *(Bah, humbug! - Ed)*, has repeated my advert several times and it has proved a prolific source of new acquaintances.

So, from having to take a handful of valium every time I switched on and even trembling at the thought of using DISCKIT to format a floppy disc, being involved in the specialised world of the PCW has not only given a boost to my self confidence, it has also introduced me to many new friends.

Reader Helpline

PCW Today is hoping to set up a network of readers willing to help other users over the 'phone or by post. If you would like to do what Kathleen does, then drop us a line giving your contact details and areas of expertise.

Write to: Reader Helpline, PCW Today, 150 Oxford Road, Middlesbrough, Teesside TS5 5EL.

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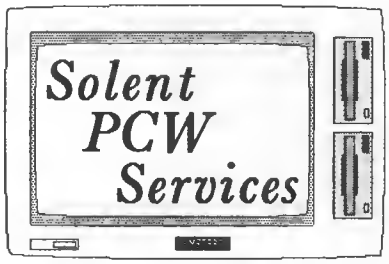

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CALL for help with LocoScript, CP/M or MicroDesign 2, or just for a chat about PCWs in general. Mon-Sat, 2-8pm. Or write to: Kathleen Thorpe, 22 Haddon Way, Long Eaton, Nottingham NG10 3EE. Tel: 0115 9720114.

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John Craggs

The '16 Unplugged!

Watch how you treat your new PcW John Craggs has this cautionary tale

DESPITE being a born cynic with a strong streak of pragmatism, I still fall for a timely offer and a PcW 16 for just £80 appealed to me.

I'd been considering adding a '16 to my stable of PCWs for a while but comfortable familiarity with Loco and a whole raft of PD utilities, coupled with Yorkie/Geordie 'carefulness' had kept my money firmly in my pockets.

But I do believe in *Carpe Diem* - seize the day - and this day was not so much seized as wrestled to the ground and killed in short order. But why buy a '16 when my '8 and '9 can do all I need and more besides?

It was a business move. Moderate success selling my *Writer's Desk* disc and numerous enquiries about suitability for the '16, made this too good to miss. Within an hour I shook hands on the deal, hardly feeling the emptiness in my pocket.

I'm not about to throw away years of old-style experience, but it seemed the best way to make a fully '16 compatible version of my disk. No third party involved, no discs winging to and fro, and by the time I've finished making the inevitable mistakes (more numerous than I'll ever admit to, but one stunning example follows later) I'll have some idea what I'm talking about when disc customers ask questions.

Being one of those boring farts who actually reads manuals - though some are far easier to read/understand than others - I spent three days getting familiar with 'Roscanne'. Not as intimate as I am with Loco but comfortable enough to stick a label on my new toy, naming it - with stunning originality - 'Ammy 3'.

I imported a clutch of short stories from a Loco disc, and was delighted to see how easily they came across, complete with their original emphasis details. Then I set up the '16 and 'Ammy 1' - my loyal much modified '9256 - working alongside each other. Almost identical text on each monitor as I ironed out the differences between the two versions. All going pretty well.

Anyone using a '16 as their first ever processor will probably love it. But my Loco-trained brain and fingers drew a regular harvest of warning beeps from 'Ammy 3' as I asked it to do the impossible/suicidal.

I had mixed feelings about the '16. Potentially it's a fine little machine - apart from an unnerving silence (surely PCW drives are *meant* to groan and whirr, aren't they?) - but I'm so used to the familiar keypresses and shortcuts of Loco that the mouse and menus nearly drove me mad. If I was spending a lot of time with the '16 I'd learn all the shortcuts for that, being a 'keyboard person'.

It's undeniably neat and tidy, with a small 'footprint'. My nephew - unhealthily familiar with Windows, drop-down menus, and three-eared electronic rodents - loved it. I felt it a little *too* user friendly but my 'proper PCW' arrogance was shortly to be seriously dented.

The first snag was the bullets. Not those fired through my window by the Dorking Mafia (LocoScript Enforcement Chapter) to teach me the error of my ways, but the simple Loco bullet available via ALT+SHIFT+M, and used for emphasis in lists. When imported into '16 the Loco bullet doesn't show on screen, but turns all subsequent text into a stream of ??????????????s. Most disconcerting.

The '16 had a nice bullet of its own but just changing them didn't unscramble the wonky text. It had to be changed in the Loco source disc before importing it into the '16. There will probably be other 'killer characters' to cope with, but if I don't go mad first I'll soon be reasonably fluent in another operating system.

Madness does seem a very valid option at the moment though, with two monitors set up next to each other, running largely similar versions of the same files but with two keyboards requiring distinctly different editing instructions. Not to mention a beady eyed rodent lurking hopefully - and perhaps a little hungrily too - in the 'mouse house' provided by the 'one previous caring owner'.

My swivel chair is squeaking in protest at this apparent destruction testing and a handful of travel-sickness pills seems like a good idea.

Still, with coffee, Post-It notes, and a bit of bloody mindedness - my fiancee calls it obsession - I'll probably survive. Sometimes I can sense the ghosts of long dead - or burnt out - mainframe programmers, red eyed with fatigue and flatulent with coffee, coke, and pot noodle, laughing as they look over my shoulder.

Now, if a few people who really understand programming and stuff like that, would sit down with a '16 and write some other software for it, there could be another success story to equal the original PCW's.

I admit to loathing the sight of the '16 when it first appeared in the shops, (the coloured keys made it look toy-like). But, having worked with one and discovered it follows mechanical engineering's Golden Rule - 'Let the form follow the function' - I believe it has all the makings of a damned fine machine.

At 1am, bearing in mind the need to get up at 4.30am for my part-time job as a postman, I shut them both down. Loyal old '9 made the usual whirrs and burbles, whilst the '16 silently flashed a red LED to tell me it was going to stand-by, that curious limbo where the program hides itself prior to switching off.

Guess which utter Pillock pulled the wrong plug out! Actually, I called myself something a lot stronger than pillock, but that was nothing compared to the extended vocabulary called upon when I tried to re-start it and found I'd blown the Power Supply Unit.

With a four way block - all sockets in use that day - I suppose this was a disaster waiting to happen. A large "16" on the plug should remind me in future, as will the enduring ache in the wallet region of my psyche.

My bargain '16 - cheaper even than Dixon's knockdown price - is now going to cost me a pretty penny to put right. I'll have to take a hammer to my piggy bank, wistfully labelled 'on-line fund'.

Pen or Processor?

Word processors were meant to revolutionise the way we write but David Langford wonders how useful they really are

ONE of my hobbies is running a little science fiction newsletter, called *Ansible*, and in a recent issue ...

(Oh, all right, let me explain. The infamous PCW software house Ansible Information was called after the newsletter, simply because I already had a bank account in the name of Ansible. The actual word had been coined by Ursula Le Guin in the 60s and used in several of her SF novels for an instantaneous interstellar communication device ... which seemed to make it a good SF newsletter title. Let me brag a moment: *Ansible* is the only British publication ever to top the Best Fanzine category of science fiction's US-dominated Hugo award, a category which *Ansible* has won three times. On the other hand, Christopher Priest points out that the title is an obvious anagram of "lesbian" - perhaps Ursula's little joke.)

As I was saying before I so rudely interrupted, a recent *Ansible* carried a news snippet about the cutting-edge SF author Neal Stephenson, author of novels like *The Diamond Age,* which explore the radical effects on society of new computer developments, virtual reality and nanotechnology. The interesting point was that Stephenson had just gone public with an announcement that he'd given up writing with a word processor, and invested in a fountain pen. Gorblimey.

Why? Because "his laptop computer crashed, erasing a large chunk of writing." That is, because he was too idle to make backups. Perhaps realising that this was not the most sensible of reasons, Stephenson went on to add that the computer *made things too easy* and "caused me to spill stuff out as fast as I could type... When I went back and read it later, I found that I was using hackneyed phrases and sometimes writing in kind of a thoughtless way. With the pen, I tend to go a little slower and think a little harder." (*New York Times*, 9 April 1998)

You don't have to be a crazed Luddite to sympathise a little with the problem - even if the Stephenson solution seems weirdly extreme. The lazy tendency to lose focus on what you're currently writing, let alone what you've already written, is encouraged by computers because even the best monitor display is a little bit harder to stare at with prolonged attention than mere paper. Nor is it easy to compare passages on different pages.

Another, subtler problem with word processing in general is identified by science fiction's wittiest critic John Clute in his book *Look at the Evidence* (1995). Dissecting a novel whose title doesn't matter, Clute reckoned that it ...

Even the best monitor display is a little harder to stare at with prolonged attention than mere paper.

"... reads as though it had been written - as most books are today, just as this review is being written - on a computer and if it doesn't exactly overstay its welcome, the way books used to when they went on too long, it does, all the same, give off a sense that too many luxurious repetitions of the moody bits were patched into the text, *just to make sure*. (In the old days, when they were written consecutively, books grew too long at their top end, like buddleia; nowadays, when they can be assembled from tesseract blocks like vast mosaics, a book is likely to become too long at any point; and then get short again, maybe.)"

Even moving blocks of text around for the best effect - so wonderfully easy with word-processing - has its hazards. You might almost unconsciously be using more urgent prose rhythms, shorter and punchier words and sentences, in the action-packed Chapter Six. Then you decide that a chunk of philosophical exposition from the more leisurely Chapter Eight needs to be moved back to Chapter Six. There's nothing wrong with the words from Chapter Eight but in Chapter Six they subtly don't fit...

Again, we're not talking about some hideous, inherent flaw in using a word processor but about human nature and the attractions of the line of least resistance. LocoScript and Protext don't themselves prevent you from reading your whole text closely in the right order, looking for jarring changes of rhythm, for Stephenson's hackneyed phrasing, and for Clute's quagmires of tedium where the book suddenly and locally becomes too long. Word processors just make it easier to be lazy and let your eye slide over the dodgy bits. As I wrote once in *PCW Plus*, smooth and glowing text on screen - unlike tatty sheets of typescript - can soothe your critical senses merely by looking so polished, perfect and "finished".

Thus many writers force themselves to take a hard look at their text by printing it out, and determinedly reading and scribbling all over the resulting pages. Terry Pratchett even has a pool of what he calls "beta test readers", trusted fans who read the electronic drafts of Discworld books and tell him which parts don't feel quite right.

One trick to help you see your writing with fresh eyes is to change the word processor margin settings. Familiar paragraphs that looked vaguely okay as a whole, suddenly appear with a new shape, revealing internal awkward phrasing. Since I mostly write magazine columns and submit them by e-mail, I always re-read the text as it appears in the completely different font, margins and background of my e-mail software. And I am frequently boggled by dreadful phrases suddenly highlighted by the change in perspective.

Knot to mention sum miss takes that parsed the spieling chequer...

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Cirtech Monksford Stables, Newtown St Boswells, Melrose TD6 0RU. *Tel: 01835 823898 Fax: 01835 822471.*
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LocoScript Software 10 Vincent Works, Dorking, Surrey RH4 3HJ. *Tel: 01306 747757 Fax: 01306 885529 Internet: www.locomotive.com.*
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